

THE ENCYCLICAL  
“HUMANI GENERIS”



THE ENCYCLICAL  
“HUMANI GENERIS”

with  
A COMMENTARY

A. C. COTTER, S.J.

*Second Edition*

Weston College Press  
Weston 93, Mass.  
1952

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Made in U.S.A.

Imprimi potest:

WILLIAM E. FITZGERALD, S.J.  
*Praep. Prov. Nov. Angl.*  
March 7, 1952

Nihil obstat:

THOMAS W. TOBIN, C.S.S.R.  
*Diocesan Censor*

Imprimatur:

⊕ RICHARD J. CUSHING  
*Archbishop of Boston*  
March 21, 1952

## PREFACE



The papal Encyclical "Humani generis" is officially dated August 12, 1950, but for some unexplained reason the world press did not bring the announcement nor the text till 10 days later. The official Latin text without any official translation was published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* of September 2, 1950. Soon thereafter brief notices began to appear in reviews and periodicals, and within a month or so a veritable flood of commentaries poured from the Catholic press, which has continued on into 1951.

The following list of articles which have come to my notice, may be informative as showing the extraordinary interest with which Catholics received the Encyclical.

*R. Rouquette, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis", in *Etudes*, Oct. 1950 p. 108-116; *F. J. Connell, C.S.S.R.*, Theological Content of *Humani Generis*, in *American Eccl. Review* 1950 II p. 321-330; *J. C. Fenton*, The Lesson of the *Humani Generis*, *ib.* p. 359-378; *idem*, The *Humani Generis* and its Predecessors, *ib.* p. 452-458; *J. Levie, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis", in *Nouvelle Revue Théol.* 1950 p. 785-793; *M. Labourdette, O.P.*, Les enseignements de l'Encyclique, in *Revue Thomiste* 1950 p. 32-55; *H. Rahner, S.J.*, Hemmschuh des Fortschritts? in *Stimmen der Zeit*, Dec. 1950 p. 161-171; *C. Boyer, S.J.*, Les leçons

de l'Encyclique, in *Gregorianum* 1950 p. 526-539; *F. Asensio, S.J.*, La Enciclica "Humani generis" y la Escritura, ib. p. 540-561; *A. Michel*, Les enseignements de l'encyclique, in *L'Ami du clergé* 1950 p. 662-671; *E. Marcotte, O.M.I.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis", in *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 1950 p. 197-200; *J. Iturrioz, S.J.*, Nueva teología: actitud de la Iglesia, in *Razón y Fe* 1950 p. 485-504; *Dom R. Russell*, "Humani generis" and the "Spiritual" Sense of Scripture, in *The Downside Review*, Winter 1950-1 p. 1-15; *A. Bea, S.J.*, "Humani generis". Ihre Grundgedanken und ihre Bedeutung, in *Scholastik* 1951 p. 36-56; *F. Taymans, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis" et la théologie, in *Nouvelle Revue Théol.* 1951 p. 3-20; *A. Hayen, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis" et la philosophie, ib. p. 113-137; *G. Lambert, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis" et l'Ecriture sainte, ib. p. 225-243; *G. Vandebroek et L. Renwart, S.J.*, L'encyclique "Humani generis" et les sciences naturelles, ib. p. 337-351; *C. Vollert, S.J.*, *Humani Generis* and the Limits of Theology, in *Theological Studies* 1951 p. 3-23; *G. Weigel, S.J.*, The Historical Background of the Encyclical *Humani Generis*, ib. p. 208-230; *A. Gemelli, O.F.M.*, Il significato storico della "Humani Generis", in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 1951 p. 3-40; *R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.*, L'encyclique "Humani Generis" et la doctrine de Saint Thomas, ib. p. 41-48; *F. Olgiati*, Rapporti tra storia, metafisica e religione, ib. p. 49-84; *C. Calvetti*, Dai "Commenti" all' Enciclica "Humani Generis", ib. p. 85-90; *R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.*, La structure de l'Encyclique "Humani generis", in *Angelicum*

1951 p. 3-17; *P. J. Hamell*, "Humani Generis": Its Teaching and Significance, in *Irish Eccl. Record* 1951 p. 289-317; *Tb. B. Falls*, Humani Generis and the Fathers of the Church, in *American Eccl. Review*, 1951 I p. 262-271. *J. Mouroux*, Affectivité et expérience chrétienne, in *Revue des sciences phil. et théol.*, 1951 p. 201-234.

There is absolute unanimity among these commentators that the new Encyclical is an outstanding papal document and of fundamental importance—primarily for Catholic theology, but also for clarifying the relations between Catholics and dissidents. As appears from the titles of their articles, most of the authors take one or the other aspect of the Encyclical for their theme, few deal with it as a whole and then only briefly. This is unfortunate in a way. An attentive reading should convince anyone that everything in the Encyclical hangs together, and that therefore an exclusive consideration of any one of its individual aspects is apt to leave a one-sided impression.

While some theological reviews have devoted or have promised to devote to the Encyclical an entire issue, no book has yet taken it *as a whole* for a subject. This study with the Latin and English text of the Encyclical and a running commentary is meant to supply the deficiency.

Yet the very idea of writing such a commentary may appear incongruous, if not presumptuous. This for three reasons: First, because the Encyclical is so clear and straightforward in the presentation of its subject-matter that no further explanation seems necessary for those to

whom it is directly addressed. Secondly, because there is the danger of underlining what is perhaps secondary and by-passing what is of prime importance, or of moving things out of focus by imposing on the papal document a line of thought foreign to the original. Thirdly, because a full-sized commentary might seem to claim for itself the authority of the Encyclical, which would, of course, be presumptuous.

Let me say at once in attenuation that my commentary was not meant as a substitute for the Encyclical, but as a stimulus to a more intensive study of it. For this reason I preferred following the original paragraph by paragraph rather than systematizing from the outset and forcing everything into my own thought pattern.

While directly addressed only to the bishops of the Catholic world, the Encyclical was evidently written for the special benefit of trained theologians, more particularly for professors in ecclesiastical institutes or seminaries. This explains why the language throughout is so concise and technical, why many assertions, positive and negative, are left without proof, why few of the concepts underlying them are amplified or justified. The readers whom the Pope had in mind, are supposed to be familiar with all that. On the other hand, certain suppositions are more or less implied in what is said explicitly, and certain conclusions can at once be drawn from the words of the Pope, but are not actually drawn in the Encyclical. The commentary wishes to supply some of this subsidiary information by way of paraphrase and expansion of the closely packed sentences and paragraphs. To all of which

a word is added here and there as to what the Encyclical does not teach or what conclusions cannot be drawn from it.

The Latin text, the only official one as far as I know, provides neither headings nor subheadings; nor are the paragraphs numbered. In order therefore to facilitate cross-references, I have numbered the paragraphs in my translation; and in order to further the understanding of the text, I have inserted headings and subheadings in the commentary. The sequence and inner connection of ideas should thereby become manifest.

Weston College

A. C. COTTER, S.J.

June 13, 1951

Feast of St. Anthony of Padua

Latest Doctor of the Church

*Preface to Second Edition*

This edition differs but slightly from the first. Though the literature on the Encyclical has kept growing, I did not think it advisable to add to that of the preceding pages. An almost complete inventory up to the end of 1951 may be found in *Theological Studies* (xii) 1951 p. 520-6; the number of commentaries listed is near a hundred.

In order to facilitate references to the Latin text, I have inserted in it the pagings of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Sept. 2, 1950, pages 561-578.

The commentary itself has not been changed except for a few additions which further study suggested. At the request of some of the reviewers I have added an Index.

Weston College

A. C. COTTER, S.J.

Febr. 3, 1952



THE  
ENCYCLICAL

# LITTERAE ENCYCLICAE

AD VENERABILES FRATRES PATRIARCHAS, PRIMATES, ARCHIEPISCOPOS, EPISCOPOS ALIOSQUE LOCORUM ORDINARIOS, PACEM ET COMMUNIONEM CUM APOSTOLICA SEDE HABENTES: DE NONNULLIS FALSIS OPINIONIBUS QUAE CATHOLICAE DOCTRINAE FUNDAMENTA SUBRUERE MINANTUR.

PIUS PP. XII  
VENERABILES FRATRES

Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem

Humani generis in rebus religiosis ac moralibus discordia et aberratio a veritate probis omnibus, imprimisque fidelibus sincerisque Ecclesiae filiis, vehementissimi doloris fons et causa semper fuere, praesertim vero hodie, cum ipsa culturae christianaee principia undique offensa cernimus.

Haud mirum quidem est huiusmodi discordiam et aberrationem extra ovile Christi semper viguisse. Nam licet humana ratio, simpliciter loquendo, veram et certam cognitionem unius Dei personalis, mundum providentia sua tuentis ac gubernantis, necnon naturalis legis a Creatore nostris animis inditae, suis naturalibus viribus ac lumine assequi revera possit, nihilominus non pauca obstant quo-

# ENCYCLICAL LETTER

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN: PATRIARCHS,  
PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS AND  
OTHER LOCAL ORDINARIES HAVING PEACE  
AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC  
SEE: CONCERNING SOME FALSE OPINIONS  
WHICH THREATEN TO UNDERMINE THE  
FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.

PIUS XII, Pope

VENERABLE BRETHREN

Greetings and Apostolic Blessing

1. Discord and error among men on moral and religious matters have always been a cause of deep sorrow to all good men, and above all to the true and loyal sons of the Church, especially today when we see the very principles of Christian culture attacked on all sides.

2. Truth to tell, it is not surprising that discord and error should always have existed outside the fold of Christ. For though, absolutely speaking, human reason can, by its natural powers and light, arrive at a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God whose providence watches over and governs the world, and also of the natural law which the Creator has written in our hearts, still not a few obstacles prevent reason from using its

minus eadem ratio hac sua nativa facultate efficaciter fructuoseque utatur. Quae enim ad Deum pertinent et ad rationes spectant quae inter homines Deumque intercedunt, veritates sunt rerum sensibilium ordinem omnino (p. 562) transcendentes, quae, cum in vitae actionem inducuntur eamque informant, sui devotionem suique abnegationem postulant. Humanus autem intellectus in talibus veritatibus acquirendis difficultate laborat tum ob sensuum imaginationisque impulsu, tum ob pravas cupiditates ex peccato originali ortas. Quo fit ut homines in rebus huiusmodi libenter sibi suadeant esse falsa vel saltem dubia quae ipsi nolint esse vera.

Quapropter divina "revelatio" moraliter necessaria dicenda est, ut ea quae in rebus religionis et morum rationi per se impervia non sunt, in praesenti quoque humani generis condicione, ab omnibus expedite, firma certitudine et nullo admixto errore cognosci possint.<sup>1</sup>

Quin immo mens humana difficultates interdum pati potest etiam in certo iudicio "credibilitatis" efformando circa catholicam fidem, quamvis tam multa ac mira signa externa divinitus disposita sint quibus vel solo naturali rationis lumine divina christiana religionis origo certo probari possit. Homo enim sive praeiudicatis ductus opinionibus, sive cupidinibus ac mala voluntate instigatus, non modo externorum signorum evidentiae, quae prostat, sed etiam supernis afflatibus, quos Deus in animos ingerit nostros, renuere ac resistere potest.

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<sup>1</sup> Conc. Vat. D.B. 1876; Const. De Fide cath., cap. 2, De revelatione.

natural ability effectively and profitably. For the truths that have to do with God and the relations between God and men, transcend completely the sensible order, and where there is question of their practical application and guidance, call for self-surrender and self-abnegation. In the acquisition of such truths the human intellect is hampered not only by the impulses of the senses and the imagination, but also by evil passions stemming from original sin. As a result, men readily persuade themselves in such matters that what they do not wish to be true, is false or at least doubtful.

3. It is for this reason that divine revelation must be called morally necessary, so that those religious and moral truths which are not of their nature beyond the reach of reason, may, also in the present condition of the human race, be known by all with ease, with unwavering certitude and without any admixture of error.

4. Furthermore, the human mind may at times experience difficulties in forming a sure judgment about the credibility of the Catholic faith, notwithstanding the wonderful external signs which God has vouchsafed in such profusion, and which suffice to prove with certitude, by the unaided light of natural reason, the divine origin of the Christian religion. For man can, whether from prejudice or passion or bad faith, shut his eyes to the available evidence of external proofs and be deaf to those supernal whisperings by which God stirs our hearts.

Cuicunque eos circumspicienti qui extra ovile Christi sunt, haud difficulter patebunt praecipuae quas viri docti non pauci ingressi sunt viae. Etenim sunt qui evolutionis, ut aiunt, systema, nondum invicte probatum in ipso disciplinarum naturalium ambitu, absque prudentia ac discrezione admissum ad omnium rerum originem pertinere contendant, atque audacter indulgeant opinione monisticae ac pantheisticae mundi universi continuae evolutioni obnoxii. Qua quidem opinione fautores communismi libenter fruuntur ut suum "materialismum dialecticum" efficacius propugnant et evehant, omni notione theistica ex animis avulsa.

(p. 563) Huiusmodi evolutionis commenta, quibus omne quod absolutum, firmum, immutabile est, repudiantur, viam straverunt novae aberranti philosophiae, quae cum "idealismo", "immanentismo" ac "pragmatismo" contendens, "existentialismi" nomen nacta est, utpote quae, immutabilibus rerum essentiis posthabitatis, de singularum "exsistentia" tantum sollicita sit.

Accedit falsus quidam "historicimus", qui solis humanae vitae eventibus inhaerens, cuiusvis veritatis legisque absolutae fundamenta subvertit, cum ad res philosophicas tum ad christiana etiam dogmata quod attinet.

In hac tanta opinionum confusione aliquid solaminis Nobis affert eos cernere, qui a "rationalismi" placitis, quibus olim instituti erant, hodie non raro ad veritatis divinitus patefactae haustus redire cupiunt, ac verbum Dei in Sacra Scriptura asservatum agnoscere ac profiteri, utpote

5. Looking around at those outside the fold of Christ, one can easily discern the principal trends which not a few learned men follow. Some are imprudent and indiscreet enough to hold that the so-called theory of evolution, although not yet fully proved even in the domain of natural sciences, explains the origin of all things, and they go so far as to support the monistic and pantheistic notion that the whole world is subject to continual evolution. Communists eagerly seize upon this theory in the hope of depriving the souls of every idea of God and of defending and propagating the more effectively their dialectical materialism.

6. The fictitious tenets of evolution, which repudiate all that is absolute, firm and immutable, have paved the way for the new erroneous philosophy which, a rival of idealism, immanentism and pragmatism, has come to be called existentialism because, forgetful of the immutable essences of things, it concerns itself only with individual existence.

7. There is also a certain false historicism which, refusing to look beyond the random happenings of human life, undermines the foundations of all truth and absolute law in the domain of philosophy as well as in that of Christian dogma.

8. In all this doctrinal confusion it is some consolation to us to see today quite a few of former adherents of rationalism desiring to return to the fountain of divinely revealed truth, acknowledging and professing the Sacred Scriptures as the word of God and as the foundation of

disciplinae sacrae fundamentum. At simul dolendum est haud paucos istorum, quo firmius verbo Dei adhaereant, eo magis humanam rationem adimere, et quo libentius Dei revelantis auctoritatem extollant, eo acrius Ecclesiae Magisterium aspernari, a Christo Domino institutum ut veritates divinitus revelatas custodiat atque interpretetur. Quod quidem non solum Sacris Litteris aperte contradicit, sed ex ipsa rerum experientia falsum manifestatur. Saepe enim ipsi a vera Ecclesia dissidentes de sua ipsorum in rebus dogmaticis discordia palam conqueruntur, ita ut Magisterii vivi necessitatem fateantur inviti.

Iamvero theologis ac philosophis catholicis, quibus grave incumbit munus divinam humanamque veritatem tuendi animisque inserendi hominum, has opiniones plus minusve a recto itinere aberrantes neque ignorare neque neglegere licet. Quin immo ipsi easdem opiniones perspectas habeant oportet, tum quia morbi non apte curantur nisi rite praecogniti fuerint, tum quia nonnumquam in falsis ipsis commentis aliquid veritatis latet, tum denique quia eadem animum provocant ad quasdam (p. 564) veritates, sive philosophicas sive theologicas, sollertiau perscrutandas ac perpendendas.

Quodsi philosophi ac theologi nostri ex hisce doctrinis, caute perspectis, tantummodo huiuscemodi fructum colligere eniterentur, nulla adesset ratio cur Ecclesiae Magisterium interloqueretur. Attamen, quamvis Nobis compertum sit catholicos doctores ab illis erroribus generatim cavere, constat tamen non deesse hodie, quemadmodum

theology. At the same time it is a matter of regret that not a few of them, while firmly clinging to the word of God, belittle human reason, and while exalting the authority of God the Revealer, severely spurn the Magisterium of the Church which Christ our Lord instituted to preserve and interpret divine revelation. Such an attitude is plainly at variance with Holy Scripture; but experience, too, reveals its inconsistency; for it often happens that those who are separated from the true Church, complain frankly of their mutual disagreements in matters of doctrine, and thus bear unwilling witness to the necessity of a living Magisterium.

9. Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose solemn duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instil it in the hearts of men, cannot afford to ignore or neglect these doctrines more or less devious. Rather they must understand them well, first because diseases are not properly treated unless they are correctly diagnosed, then, too, because false theories sometimes contain a certain amount of truth, and finally because the mind is thereby spurred on to examine and weigh certain philosophical or theological doctrines more attentively.

10. Now if our philosophers and theologians merely tried to derive such benefit from the cautious study of these theories, the Magisterium of the Church would have no reason to intervene. But although we know well that the vast majority of Catholic teachers guard against these errors, there are some, today as in apostolic times, who

apostolicis temporibus, qui rebus novis plus aequo studentes, ac vel etiam metuentes ne earum rerum quas progradientis aetatis scientia invexerit, ignari habeantur, sacri Magisterii moderationi se subducere contendant ideoque in eo versentur periculo ne sensim sine sensu ab ipsa veritate divinitus revelata discedant aliosque secum in errorem induant.

Immo et aliud obversatur periculum idque eo gravius quo virtutis est specie magis obtectum. Plures enim sunt qui humani generis discordiam ac mentium confusionem deplorantes, imprudenti animorum studio permoti, impetu quodam moventur atque impenso desiderio flagrant infringendi saepta quibus probi honestique viri invicem disiunguntur, "irenismum" tales amplectentes ut, quaestionibus missis quae homines separant, non modo respiciant ad irruentem atheismum communibus viribus propulsandum, sed etiam ad opposita in rebus quoque dogmaticis reconcilianda. Et quemadmodum olim fuerunt qui rogarent num translaticia Ecclesiae apologetica ratio obstatum constitueret potius quam auxilium ad animos Christo lucrando, ita hodie non desunt qui eo usque procedere audeant ut serio quaestionem moveant num theologia eiusque methodus, quales in scholis ecclesiastica approbante auctoritate vigent, non modo perficienda, verum etiam omnino reformandae sint, ut regnum Christi quocumque terrarum, inter homines cuiusvis culturae vel cuiusvis opinionis religiosae efficacius propagetur.

Quodsi iidem ad nihil aliud intenderent quam ad dis-

hanker too much after novelties and who dread being thought ignorant of the latest scientific findings. Tending to withdraw from the guidance of the sacred Magisterium, they are in danger of gradually losing revealed truth and of drawing others along with them into error.

11. There is yet another danger all the more serious because it hides under the appearance of virtue. Many in fact, deplored the discord among men and the prevalent intellectual confusion, yet fired by an imprudent zeal for souls, plunge ahead in their eagerness to break down the barriers that divide good and honest men. They advocate an irenicism which, setting aside the questions that divide men, aims not only at joining forces against the onrush of atheism, but also at bridging contradictions in matters dogmatic. And as in former times there were men who questioned whether the traditional apologetics of the Church did not constitute an obstacle rather than a help to the winning of souls for Christ, so today some go so far as to question seriously whether theology and its method as carried on in our schools with the approval of ecclesiastical authority, should not only be improved, but completely made over, so that the kingdom of Christ could everywhere, among men of every culture and religious persuasion, be propagated more efficaciously.

12. Now if they only meant that ecclesiastical teach-

ciplinam ecclesiasticam eiusque methodum hodiernis ~~con-~~  
ditionibus ac necessitatibus, nova quadam inducta ratione,  
aptius accom (p. 565) modandas, nulla fere ~~eset causa~~  
timendi; at vero imprudenti aestuantes "irenismo", non  
nulli veluti obices ad fraternam unitatem restaurandam ~~et~~  
putare videntur, quae ipsis legibus ac principiis a Christo  
datis innituntur itemque institutis ab eo conditis, vel quae  
munimina ac fulcimina exstant integritatis fidei, quibus  
collapsis omnia uniuntur quidem, sed solummodo in  
ruinam.

Novae huiusmodi opiniones, sive improbando novitatis  
desiderio sive laudabili causa moveantur, non semper  
eodem gradu, eadem claritate iisdemque terminis propo-  
nuntur, nec semper unanimo autorum consensu; quae  
enim hodie a quibusdam, cautelis nonnullis ac distinctioni-  
bus adhibitis magis tecte docentur, cras ab aliis audaciori-  
bus palam ac immoderate proponentur, non sine multorum  
offensione, praesertim iunioris cleri, nec sine ecclesiasticae  
auctoritatis detimento. Quodsi cautius agi solet in libris  
publice editis, iam liberius disseritur in libellis privatum  
communicatis et in acroasibus coetibusque. Nec tantum  
inter sodales utriusque cleri et in sacris seminariis institu-  
tisque religiosis tales opiniones divulgantur, sed etiam  
inter laicos, inter eos praesertim qui iuventuti instituenda  
operam navant.

Quod autem ad theologiam spectat, quorundam con-  
silium est dogmatum significationem quam maxime ex-  
tenuare; ipsumque dogma a loquendi ratione in Ecclesia

ing and its method should, through the introduction of new ideas, be adapted to modern conditions and requirements, there would scarcely be any cause for alarm. But fired by an imprudent irenicism, some appear to consider as an obstacle to the restoration of fraternal union, tenets based on the laws and principles promulgated by Christ and on the institutions founded by Him, or those things which serve as ramparts and buttresses of the integrity of the faith, and the destruction of which would indeed bring about the union of all, but only in a common ruin.

13. The new opinions, whether originating from a reprehensible itch of novelty or from a laudable motive, are not always advanced in the same degree, nor with equal clarity, nor in the same terms, nor with unanimity among their sponsors. What is today put forward rather covertly by some, not without precautions and distinctions, will tomorrow be proclaimed from the housetops and without moderation by more venturesome spirits. This is a scandal to many, especially among the young clergy, and detrimental to ecclesiastical authority. And while some caution is as a rule observed in published works, there is less of it in writings intended for private circulation as well as in conferences and lectures. Moreover, these ideas are spread not only among members of the clergy, both secular and regular, and in seminaries and religious institutes, but also among the laity and especially among those who are engaged in teaching youth.

14. In theology some are out to whittle down as much as possible the content of dogmas, to free dogma itself

iamdiu recepta et a philosophicis notionibus penes catholicos doctores vigentibus liberare, ut in catholica exponna doctrina ad Sacrae Scripturae sanctorumque Patrum dicendi modum redeatur. Spem ipsi fovent fore ut dogma elementis denudatum quae extrinsecus a divina revelatione esse dicunt, fructuose comparetur cum eorum opinionibus dogmaticis qui ab Ecclesiae unitate seiuncti sunt, utque hac via pedetemptim perveniantur ad assimilanda sibi invicem dogma catholicum et placita dissidentium.

Accedit quod, catholica doctrina ad hanc redacta conditionem, viam sterni autumant qua, hodiernis necessitatibus satis (p. 566) faciendo, hodiernae etiam philosophiae notionibus dogma exprimi possit, sive "immanentismi" sive "idealismi" sive "existentialismi" aliasve systematis. Quod idcirco etiam fieri posse ac debere audaciores quidam affirmant quia fidei mysteria numquam notionibus adaequate veris significari posse contendunt, sed tantum notionibus "approximativis", ut aiunt, ac semper mutabilibus quibus veritas aliquatenus quidem indicetur, sed necessario quoque deformetur. Quapropter non absurdum esse putant, sed necesse omnino esse ut theologia pro variis philosophiis quibus decursu temporum tamquam suis utitur instrumentis, novas antiquis substituat notiones, ita ut diversis quidem modis, ac vel etiam aliqua ratione oppositis, idem tamen, ut aiunt, valentibus, easdem divinas veritates humanitus reddat. Addunt etiam historiam dogmatum consistere in reddendis variis sibique succendentibus

from a terminology of long standing in the Church and from philosophical concepts employed by Catholic teachers, and to return in the explanation of Catholic doctrine to the modes of expression used in Holy Scripture and by the Fathers. They cherish the hope that when dogma is stripped of the elements which they call extrinsic to divine revelation, fruitful comparisons can be made with the doctrinal opinions of those who are separated from the unity of the Church, and that in this way we shall gradually arrive at a mutual assimilation of Catholic dogma and the tenets of the dissidents.

15. They also assert that such a change of Catholic doctrine would enable us to satisfy a modern need; for it would permit of dogma being expressed in the categories of modern thought, whether of immanentism or idealism or existentialism or any other ism. Some, more daring, affirm that this can and must be done for yet another reason; they claim that the mysteries of faith cannot be expressed by concepts that are adequately true, but only by approximate and ever changeable notions which vaguely hint at the truth, but also necessarily distort it. They do not consider it absurd, but altogether necessary that theology should substitute new concepts in place of the old ones in keeping with the variety of philosophies which it has used as its instruments; they think that theology could thus express in human language the same divine truths by different modes which though somewhat contradictory, may be called equivalent. Finally, they go on to say that the history of dogma consists in tracing the

formis quas veritas revelata induerit, secundum diversas doctrinas et opinaciones quae saeculorum decursu ortae fuerint.

Patet autem ex iis quae diximus, huiusmodi molimina non tantum ducere ad "relativismum" dogmaticum, quem vocant, sed illum iam reapse continere; cui quidem despctus doctrinae communiter traditae eorumque vocabulorum quibus eadem significatur, satis superque favet. Nemo sane est qui non videat huiusmodi notionum vocabula cum in scholis tum ab ipsius Ecclesiae Magisterio adhibita perfici et perpoliri posse; ac notum praeterea est Ecclesiam in iisdem vocibus adhibendis non semper constantem fuisse. Liquet etiam Ecclesiam non cuilibet systemati philosophico, brevi temporis spatio vigenti, devinciri posse; sed ea quae communi consensu a catholicis doctoribus composita per plura saecula fuere ad aliquam dogmatis intelligentiam attingendam, tam caduco fundamento procul dubio non nituntur. Nituntur enim principiis ac notionibus ex vera rerum creatarum cognitione deductis; in quibus quidem deducendis cognitionibus humanae menti veritas divinitus revelata quasi stella per Ecclesiam illuxit. Quare mirum non est aliquas huiusmodi notiones a Conciliis Oecumenicis non solum adhibitas, sed etiam sanctitas esse, ita ut ab eis discedere nefas sit.

Quapropter neglegere vel reicere vel suo valore privare tot ac tanta quae pluries saeculari labore a viris non communis ingenii ac sanctitatis, invigilante sacro Magisterio nec sine Sancti Spiritus lumine et ductu, ad accuratius

successive forms which were given to revealed truth in accordance with the various theories and speculations as they emerged in the course of centuries.

16. But it is obvious from all we said that such projects not merely lead to what is called dogmatic relativism, but already contain it. The contempt shown for the commonly accepted doctrine and the corresponding terminology is significant enough in this respect. To be sure, the terminology used in the schools and even by the Magisterium of the Church is susceptible of further improvement and refinement; it is also well-known that the Church did not always keep to the same identical terms; it is evident, too, that the Church cannot tie herself to any philosophy that enjoys a brief moment of popularity. But what has been thought out over the centuries and agreed upon by Catholic teachers in the effort to gain some understanding of dogma, surely does not rest on a flimsy foundation of that sort. It rests on principles and conceptions which are inferred from a just apprehension of created things; and in the making of such inferences divine revelation has, like a star, illuminated the human mind through the Church's agency. No wonder that General Councils have not only used but also sanctioned some of these conceptions, so that it would be wrong to discard them.

17. It would be wrong to neglect or cast aside or rob of their meaning those precious concepts which have been coined and polished in order to express, with ever-increasing accuracy, the truths of faith—a process that has often cost centuries of labor and was carried out by men of uncommon intelligence and sanctity, under the watchful eye of the Magisterium, with light and guidance, too,

in dies fidei veritates exprimendas mente concepta, expressa ac perpolita sunt, ut eorundem in locum coniecturales notiones sufficientantur ac quaedam fluxae ac vagae novae philosophiae dictiones, quae ut flos agri hodie sunt et cras decident, non modo summa est imprudentia, verum etiam ipsum dogma facit quasi arundinem vento agitatum. Despectus autem vocabulorum ac notionum quibus theologi scholastici uti solent, sponte dicit ad enervandam theologiam, ut aiunt speculativam, quam, cum ratione theologica innitatur, vera certitudine carere existimant.

Utique, proh dolor, rerum novarum studiosi a scholasticae theologiae contemptu ad neglegendum, ac vel etiam ad despiciendum facile transeunt ipsum Magisterium Ecclesiae, quod theologiam illam sua auctoritate tantopere comprobat. Hoc enim Magisterium ab ipsis tamquam progressionis sufflamen ac scientiae obex exhibetur; ab acatholicis vero quibusdam iam veluti iniustum frenum consideratur quo excultiiores aliqui theologi a disciplina sua innovanda detineantur. Et quamquam hoc sacrum Magisterium, in rebus fidei et morum, cuilibet theologo proxima et universalis veritatis norma esse debet, utpote cui Christus Dominus totum depositum fidei—Sacras nempe Litteras ac divinam “traditionem”—et custodendum et tuendum et interpretandum concredidit, attamen officium quo fideles tenentur illos quoque fugere errores qui ad haeresim plus minusve accedant, ideoque “etiam constitutiones et decreta servare quibus pravae huiusmodi

from the Holy Spirit. To substitute for them conjectural notions and the vague and fluid diction of a new philosophy, which thrive today like the flowers of the field and wilt tomorrow, would indeed be the height of imprudence; dogma itself would become no better than a reed shaken by the wind. Disrespect for the terms and concepts current among scholastic theologians would take all the force out of what is called speculative theology, which has no real validity, they say, inasmuch as it rests on theological reasoning.

18. Worse still, the lovers of novelty easily pass from disdain of scholastic theology to the neglect of and even contempt for the Magisterium of the Church which bestows high authoritative approval on that branch of theology. They represent the Magisterium as a hindrance to progress and an obstacle in the way of science, while certain non-Catholics look upon it as an unjust restraint which prevents better qualified theologians from reforming their science. Now it is true that this sacred Magisterium must remain, in matters of faith and morals, the proximate and universal criterion of truth for every theologian, since to it has been entrusted by Christ our Lord the whole deposit of faith—Sacred Scripture and divine Tradition—to be preserved, guarded and interpreted; but the faithful are also obliged to flee those errors which more or less approach heresy, and accordingly “to keep also the constitutions and decrees by which such evil

opiniones a Sancta Sede proscriptae et prohibitae sunt”,<sup>2</sup> nonnumquam ita ignoratur ac si non habeatur. Quae in Romanorum Pontificum Encyclicis Litteris de indole et constitutione Ecclesiae exponuntur, a (p. 568) quibusdam consulto neglegi solent, ea quidem de causa ut praevaleat notio quaedam vaga, quam ex antiquis Patribus, praesertim graecis, haustam esse profitentur. Pontifices enim, ut ipsi dictitant, de his quae inter theologos disputantur, iudicare nolunt, itaque ad pristinos fontes redeundum est et ex antiquorum scriptis recentiora Magisterii constitutiones ac decreta explicanda sunt.

Quae etsi fortasse scite dicta videntur, attamen fallacia non carent. Verum namque est generatim Pontifices theologis libertatem concedere in iis quae inter melioris notae doctores vario sensu disputantur; at historia docet plura quae prius liberae disceptationi subiecta fuerint, postea nullam iam disceptationem pati posse.

Neque putandum est ea quae in Encyclicis Litteris proponuntur, assensum per se non postulare, cum in iis Pontifices supremam sui Magisterii potestatem non exerceant. Magisterio enim ordinario haec docentur, de quo illud etiam valet: “Qui vos audit, me audit”;<sup>3</sup> ac plerumque quae in Encyclicis Litteris proponuntur et inculcantur, iam aliunde ad doctrinam catholicam pertinent. Quodsi Summi Pontifices in actis suis de re hactenus controversa data opera sententiam ferunt, omnibus patet rem illam,

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<sup>2</sup> C.I.C., can. 1324; cf. Conc. Vat., D.B. 1820, Const. De Fide cath., cap. 4, De fide et ratione, post canones.

<sup>3</sup> Luc., X, 16.

doctrines are proscribed and forbidden by the Holy See". This duty is sometimes ignored just as if it did not exist. What is expounded in the Encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs concerning the nature and the constitution of the Church is habitually and deliberately set aside by some with the intent of substituting certain vague notions which they pretend to have found in the ancient Fathers, especially the Greeks. For the Popes, they claim, do not wish to pass judgment on what are matters of dispute among theologians; so recourse must be had to the primitive sources, and the later constitutions and decrees of the Magisterium must be interpreted in accordance with the writings of antiquity.

19. While this may sound clever, it is really a sophism. It is true that as a rule the Popes leave theologians free in those matters on which respectable authorities hold divergent opinions; but, as history teaches, many points that were formerly open to dispute, are so no longer.

20. Nor must it be thought that what is contained in Encyclical letters does not of itself demand assent, on the pretext that the Popes do not exercise in them the supreme power of their teaching authority. Rather, such teachings belong to the ordinary Magisterium, of which it is also true to say: "He who heareth you, heareth me"; very often, too, what is expounded and inculcated in Encyclical letters, already appertains to Catholic doctrine for other reasons. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their official acts expressly pass judgment on a matter debated until

secundum mentem ac voluntatem eorundem Pontificum, quaestionem liberae inter theologos disceptationis iam haberi non posse.

Verum quoque est theologis semper redeundum esse ad divinae revelationis fontes: eorum enim est indicare ratione ea quae a vivo Magisterio docentur, in Sacris Litteris et in divina "traditione", "sive explicite sive implicite inveniantur".<sup>4</sup> Accedit quod uterque doctrinae divinitus revelatae fons tot tantosque continet thesauros veritatis ut numquam reapse exhauriatur. Quapropter sacrorum fontium studio sacrae disciplinae semper iuvenescunt; dum contra speculatio quae ulteriorem sacri depositi inquisitionem neglegit, ut experiundo novi (p. 569) mus, sterilis evadit. Sed hac de causa theologia etiam positiva, quam dicunt, scientiae dumtaxat historicae aequari nequit. Una enim cum sacris eiusmodi fontibus Deus Ecclesiae suae Magisterium vivum dedit, ad ea quoque illustranda et enucleanda, quae in fidei deposito nonnisi obscure ac velut implicite continentur. Quod quidem depositum nec singulis christifidelibus nec ipsis theologis divinus Redemptor concredidit authenticum interpretandum, sed soli Ecclesiae Magisterio. Si autem hoc suum munus Ecclesia exercet, sicut saeculorum decursu saepenumero factum est, sive ordinario sive extraordinario eiusdem muneris exercitio, patet omnino falsam esse methodum qua ex obscuris clara explicentur, quin immo contrarium omnes sequi ordinem necesse esse. Quare Decessor Noster imm. mem. Pius IX, docens nobilissimum

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<sup>4</sup> Pius IX, *Inter gravissimas*, 28 oct. 1870, *Acta*, vol. I, p. 260.

then, it is obvious to all that the matter, according to the mind and will of the same Pontiffs, cannot be considered any longer a question open for discussion among theologians.

21. It is also true that theologians must always go back to the sources of divine revelation; for it pertains to their office to show how the teachings of the living Magisterium are contained, either explicitly or implicitly, in the Sacred Scriptures and divine Tradition. Besides, each source of divinely revealed doctrine contains so many rich treasures of truth that they can really never be exhausted. Hence it is that study of the sacred sources brings to theology ever new youth, whereas speculation which neglects to delve deeper into the sacred deposit, proves barren, as we know from experience. But this is no reason to put even so-called positive theology on a par with mere history. For together with those sources God has given to His Church a living Magisterium to elucidate and explain what is contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and, as it were, implicitly. No, the authentic interpretation of the deposit our divine Redeemer did not entrust to the faithful, nor even to theologians, but exclusively to the Magisterium of the Church. If then the Church does exercise this function, as she has often done in the past, either in the ordinary or in an extraordinary way, it is plain how false is a method which would explain what is clear by what is obscure, and that all must follow the opposite procedure. We see now why our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX, when explaining that the

theologiae munus illud esse quod ostendat quomodo ab Ecclesia definita doctrina contineatur in fontibus, non absque gravi causa illa addidit verba: "eo ipso sensu quo ab Ecclesia definita est".

Ut autem ad novas quas supra attigimus opiniones redeamus, plura etiam a nonnullis proponuntur vel mentibus instillantur in detrimentum divinae auctoritatis Sacrae Scripturae. Etenim sensum definitionis Concilii Vaticani de Deo Sacrae Scripturae auctore audacter quidam pervertunt; atque sententiam, iam pluries reprobatam, renovant, secundum quam Sacrarum Litterarum immunitas errorum ad ea solummodo quae de Deo ac de rebus moralibus et religiosis traduntur, pertineat. Immo perperam loquuntur de sensu humano Sacrorum Librorum sub quo sensus eorum divinus lateat, quem solum infallibilem declarant. In Sacra Scriptura interpretanda nullam haberi volunt rationem analogiae fidei ac "traditionis" Ecclesiae; ita ut Sanctorum Patrum et sacri Magisterii doctrina quasi ad trutinam Sacrae Scripturae, ratione mere humana ab exegetis explicatae, sit revocanda, potius quam eadem Sacra Scriptura exponenda sit ad mentem Ecclesiae, quae a Christo Domino totius depositi veritatis divinitus revelatae custos ac interpres constituta est.

(p. 570) Ac praeterea sensus litteralis Sacrae Scripturae eiusque expositio a tot tantisque exegetis, vigilante Ecclesia, elaborata, ex commenticiis eorum placitis, novae cedere debent exegesi quam symbolicam ac spiritualem appellant et qua Sacra Biblia Veteris Testamenti, quae hodie in Ecclesia

noblest office of theology is to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources, added these words, and with good reason: "in the same sense in which it has been defined by the Church".

22. To return, however, to the novel doctrines mentioned above, there are also those who propose or suggest theories inimical to the divine authority of Sacred Scripture. For some, audaciously perverting the sense of the Vatican Council's definition that God is the author of Holy Scripture, again put forward the opinion, already condemned more than once, which asserts that immunity from error extends only to those parts of the Bible that treat of God and of moral and religious matters. Besides that, they wrongly speak of a human sense of the Sacred Scriptures beneath which lies hidden the divine sense, the only infallible one according to them. In the interpretation of Scripture they will not take into account the analogy of faith and the Tradition of the Church. Thus the teachings of the Fathers and the Magisterium would have to be judged by Holy Scripture as interpreted by a purely rational exegesis, whereas Holy Scripture is to be explained according to the mind of the Church which Christ our Lord has appointed guardian and interpreter of the whole deposit of divinely revealed truth.

23. Further, the literal sense of Holy Scripture and its explanation which has been worked out by so many great exegetes under the Church's vigilance, should now, according to their phantasies, yield to a new exegesis which they call symbolic or spiritual, so that the Old Testament, which today is a sealed book in the Church, would at long

tamquam fons clausus lateant, tandem aliquando omnibus aperiantur. Hac ratione asseverant difficultates omnes evanescere, quibus ii tantummodo praepediantur qui sensu litterali Scripturarum adhaereant.

Quae quidem omnia quam aliena sint a principiis ac normis hermeneuticis a Decessoribus Nostris fel. rec. Leone XIII in Encyclicis Litteris *Providentissimus*, et a Benedicto XV in Enc. Litt. *Spiritus Paraclitus*, itemque a Nobis ipsis in Enc. Litt. *Divino afflante Spiritu*, rite statutis nemo est qui non videat.

Ac mirum non est huiusmodi novitates, ad omnes fere theologiae partes quod attinet, iam venenosos peperisse fructus. In dubium revocatur humanam rationem, absque divinae “revelationis” divinaeque gratiae auxilio, argumentis ex creatis rebus deductis demonstrare posse Deum personalem exsistere; negatur mundum initium habuisse, atque contenditur creationem mundi necessariam esse, cum ex necessaria liberalitate divini amoris procedat; aeterna et infallibilis liberarum actionum hominum praescientia Deo item denegatur; quae quidem Vaticani Concilii declarationibus adversantur.<sup>5</sup>

Quaestio etiam a nonnullis agitur num Angeli creaturae personales sint; numque materia a spiritu essentialiter differat. Alii veram “gratuitatem” ordinis supernaturalis corrumpunt, cum autem Deum entia intellectu praedita condere non posse quin eadem ad beatificam visionem

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<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Conc. Vat., Const. De Fide cath., cap. 1, De Deo rerum omnium creatore.

last be rendered intelligible to all. In this way, they claim, all difficulties would vanish, difficulties which irk only those who cling to the literal sense of Scripture.

24. Everyone sees how foreign all this is to the hermeneutical principles and norms rightly set down by our predecessors of happy memory, Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Providentissimus*, and Benedict XV in the Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, as also ourselves in the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.

25. It is not surprising that novelties of this sort have already borne their poisoned fruit in almost all branches of theology. It is now doubted that human reason can, without the help of divine revelation and grace, prove the existence of a personal God by arguments drawn from created things; it is denied that the world had a beginning, and it is argued that the creation of the world was necessary since it proceeds from the necessary liberality of divine love; it is denied that God has eternal and infallible foreknowledge of the free actions of men—all this in opposition to the decrees of the Vatican Council.

26. Some also question whether angels are personal beings, and whether matter differs essentially from spirit. Others misinterpret the gratuity of the supernatural order when they pretend that God cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to

ordinet et vocet. Nec satis; nam peccati originalis notio, definitionibus tridentinis posthabitatis, pervertitur, unaque simul peccati in universum prout est Dei offensa, itemque satisfactionis a Christo pro nobis exhibitae. Nec desunt qui contendant transubstantiationis doctrinam, utpote antiquata notione philosophica substantiae innixam, ita emendandam esse ut realis Christi praesentia in Ss. Eucharistia ad quemdam symbolismum reducatur, quatenus consecratae species nonnisi signa efficacia sint spiritualis praesentiae Christi eiusque intimae coniunctionis cum fidelibus membris in Corpore Mysticō.

Quidam censem se non devinciri doctrina paucis ante annis in Encyclicis nostris litteris exposita ac fontibus "revelationis" innixa, quae quidem docet corpus Christi mysticum et Ecclesiam Catholicam Romanam unum idemque esse.<sup>6</sup> Aliqui necessitatem pertinendi ad veram Ecclesiam, ut sempiterna attingatur salus, ad vanam formulam reducunt. Alii denique rationali indoli "credibilitatis" fidei christianaे iniuriam inferunt.

Haec et alia id genus iam serpere constat inter nonnullos filios Nostros, quos incautum animarum studium vel falsi nominis scientia decipiunt, quibusque maerenti animo et notissimas veritates repetere cogimur et manifestos errores errorisque pericula non sine anxitudine indicare.

In comperto est quanti Ecclesia humanam rationem faciat, quod pertinet ad exsistentiam unius Dei personalis

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<sup>6</sup> Cfr. Litt. Enc. Mysticī Corporis Christi, A.A.S., vol. XXXV, p. 193 sq.

the beatific vision. Nor is this all. Disregarding the definitions of the Council of Trent, some pervert the concept of original sin, along with the concept of sin in general, as an offense against God, as well as the idea of satisfaction offered for us by Christ. There are those who insist that the doctrine of transubstantiation as being based on an antiquated philosophic notion of substance, should be so modified that the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is reduced to a kind of symbolism, whereby the consecrated species would be merely efficacious signs of the spiritual presence of Christ and of His intimate union with the faithful members in His Mystical Body.

27. Some think they are not bound by the doctrine, set forth in our Encyclical letter of a few years ago and based on the sources of revelation, according to which the Mystical Body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same. Some reduce to an empty formula the necessity of belonging to the true Church in order to gain salvation. Others finally infringe on the reasonable character of the credibility of the Christian faith.

28. We know that these and similar errors have crept in among certain of our sons, who are deceived by an indiscreet zeal for souls or by false science. To them we are compelled with a grieving heart to repeat once again truths already well known and to point out, not without anxiety, manifest errors and dangers of error.

29. It is well known how highly the Church esteems human reason for its function to demonstrate with cer-

certo demonstrandam, itemque ad ipsius christianaे fidei fundamenta signis divinis invicte comprobanda; parique modo ad legem quam Creator animis hominum indidit, rite exprimendam; ac denique ad aliquam mysteriorum intellegentiam assequendam eamque fructuosissimam.<sup>7</sup> Hoc tamen munus ratio tum solum apte ac tuto absolvere poterit cum debito modo exculta fuerit; nempe cum fuerit sana illa philosophia imbuta quae veluti patrimonium iamdudum exstat a superioribus christianis aetatibus traditum, atque adeo altioris etiam ordinis auctoritatem habet, quia ipsum Magisterium Ecclesiae eius principia ac praecipua asserta, a viris magni ingenii paulatim patefacta ac defi (p. 572) nita, ad ipsius divinae "revelationis" trutinam vocavit. Quae quidem philosophia in Ecclesia agnita ac recepta, et verum sincerumque cognitionis humanae valorem tuetur, et metaphysica inconcussa principia—rationis nempe sufficientis, causalitatis et finalitatis—ac demum certae et immutabilis veritatis assecutionem.

In hac philosophia plura sane exponuntur quibus res fidei et morum neque directe nec indirecte attinguntur, quaeque propterea Ecclesia liberae disceptationi permittit; at quoad alia plura, praesertim quoad principia assertaque praecipua quae supra memoravimus, eadem libertas non viget. Etiam in huiusmodi essentialibus quaestionibus philosophiam quidem aptiore ac ditiore veste induere licet, efficacioribus dictionibus communire, quibusdam scholar-

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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. Conc. Vat., D.B. 1796.

tainty the existence of God, personal and one; to prove beyond doubt from divine signs the foundations of the Christian faith itself; to express properly the law which the Creator has imprinted in the hearts of men; and finally to attain to some understanding, indeed a very fruitful one, of mysteries.

30. But reason can perform these functions safely and adequately only when properly trained; that is, when imbued with that sound philosophy which constitutes a patrimony handed on from earlier Christian ages, and which possesses an added authority of even higher order, since the Magisterium of the Church has weighed in the balance of divine revelation its principles and major assertions slowly elaborated and defined by men of great genius. This philosophy, acknowledged and accepted by the Church, safeguards the genuine validity of human knowledge, the unshaken metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality and finality, in a word, the possibility of attaining certain and unchangeable truth.

31. Of course, there are many things in this philosophy which do not touch faith and morals either directly or indirectly, and which the Church leaves therefore to the free discussion of scholars. But this does not apply to many other things, especially to the principles and major assertions just referred to. Even in these fundamental issues, however, it is permissible to clothe our philosophy in fitter and richer dress, to reenforce it with more effec-

um adminiculis minus aptis exuere, sanis quoque quibusdam elementis progradientis humanae lucubrationis caute locupletare; numquam tamen eam subvertere fas est vel falsis principiis contaminare, vel quasi magnum quidem, sed obsoletum existimare monumentum. Non enim veritas omnisque eius philosophica declaratio in dies mutari possunt, cum potissimum agatur de principiis humanae menti per se notis, vel de sententiis illis quae tum saeculorum sapientia, tum etiam divinae "revelationis" consensu ac fulcimine innituntur. Quidquid veri mens humana, sincere quaerens, invenire poterit, iam acquisitae veritati profecto adversari nequit; siquidem Deus, summa Veritas, humanum intellectum condidit atque regit, non ut rite acquisitis cotidie nova opponat, sed ut, remotis erroribus qui forte irrepserint, verum vero superstruat eodem ordine ac compagine quibus ipsa rerum natura, ex qua verum hauritur, constituta cernitur. Quapropter christianus, sive philosophus sive theologus, non festinanter ac leviter amplectatur quidquid novi in dies excogitatum fuerit, sed summa sedulitate id perpendat ac iusta in trutina ponat, ne adeptam veritatem amittat vel corrumpat, gravi profecto cum ipsius fidei discrimine ac detimento.

(p. 573) Quae si bene perspecta fuerint, facile patebit cur Ecclesia exigat ut futuri sacerdotes philosophicis disciplinis instruantur "ad Angelici Doctoris rationem, doctrinam et principia",<sup>8</sup> quandoquidem plurium saeculorum experientia probe noscit Aquinatis methodum ac rationem

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<sup>8</sup> C.I.C., can. 1366, 2.

tive terminology, to divest it of certain scholastic aids found less useful, and to embody in it cautiously the sound fruits of human progress. But never may we subvert it, or contaminate it with false principles, or esteem it merely as a grand but obsolete relic. For truth and its philosophical expression cannot change from day to day, least of all where there is question of the self-evident principles of the human mind or of those assertions which are supported by the wisdom of the ages and agree with divine revelation. Surely, whatever new truth the human mind is able to discover by honest research, cannot contradict truth already acquired; for God, the sovereign Truth, has created the human intellect and guides it, not that it may daily oppose novelties to rightly established truth, but rather that, eliminating errors which may have crept in, it may build truth upon truth in the same order and structure that we perceive to exist in nature, the source of truth. Let no Catholic then, whether philosopher or theologian, be too hasty in embracing whatever novelty happens to be thought up from day to day, but rather let him weigh it carefully and with a balanced judgment, lest he lose or contaminate the truth he already has, with grave danger and damage to his faith.

32. If all this has been well understood, it is easily seen why the Church demands that future priests be trained in philosophy "according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor", since, as she well knows from the experience of ages, the method of Aquinas is singularly preeminent both for teaching students and

sive in tironibus erudiendis, sive in absconditis veritatibus pervestigandis, singulari praestantia eminere; ipsius autem doctrinam cum divina "revelatione" quasi quodam concentu consonare, atque ad fidei fundamenta in tuto collocanda efficacissimam esse, necnon ad sanae progressionis fructus utiliter et secure colligendos.<sup>9</sup>

Hac de causa quam maxime deplorandum est philosophiam in Ecclesia receptam ac agnitam hodie a nonnullis despectui haberi, ita ut antiquata quoad formam, rationalistica, ut aiunt, quoad cogitandi processum, impudenter renuntietur. Dictitant enim hanc nostram philosophiam perperam opinionem tueri metaphysicam absolute veram exsistere posse; dum contra asseverant res, praesertim transcendentes, non aptius exprimi posse quam disparatis doctrinis quae sese mutuo compleant quamvis sibi invicem quodammodo opponantur. Quare philosophiam nostris traditam scholis, cum sua lucida quaestionum descriptione ac solutione, cum accurata sua notio-num determinatione clarisque distinctionibus, utilem quidem esse posse concedunt ad propaedeusim scholasticae theologiae, mentibus hominum medii aevi egregie accommodatam; non tamen praebere philosophandi rationem quae hodiernae nostrae culturae ac necessitatibus respondeat. Opponunt deinde philosophiam perennem nonnisi philosophiam immutabilium essentiarum esse, dum hodierna mens ad "exsistentiam" singulorum spectet necesse

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<sup>9</sup> A.A.S., vol. XXXVIII, 1946, p. 387.

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for bringing hidden truth to light. She also knows that his doctrine is in perfect harmony with divine revelation, and is most effective for safeguarding the foundations of the faith as well as for reaping, safely and usefully, the fruits of sound progress.

33. How deplorable it is then that this philosophy, received and honored by the Church, is scorned by some who are impudent enough to call it outmoded in form and rationalistic, as they say, in its thought processes. They keep repeating that this our philosophy wrongly maintains the possibility of a metaphysic that is absolutely true; whereas, they say, reality, especially transcendent reality, cannot be expressed better than by disparate propositions which complete one another, even though they are almost contradictory. They concede that the philosophy taught in our schools, with its clear exposition of questions and their solution, with its accurate definitions of terms and clear-cut distinctions, can be useful as a preparation for scholastic theology, and that it was marvelously adapted to the medieval mentality; but they deny that it offers a method of philosophizing suited to the needs of our modern culture. They object also that our *philosophia perennis* is only a philosophy of immutable essences, whereas the contemporary mind must be interested in the existence of

est et ad vitam semper fluentem. Dum vero hanc philosophiam despiciunt, alias extollunt sive antiquas sive recentes, sive Orientis sive Occidentis populorum, ita ut in animos insinuare videantur quamlibet philosophiam vel opinionem, quibusdam additis, si opus fuerit, correctionibus vel complementis, (p. 574) cum dogmate catholico componi posse; quod quidem falsum omnino esse, cum praesertim de commentis illis agatur quae vel "immanentismum" vocant, vel "idealismum", vel "materialismum" sive historicum sive dialecticum, ac vel etiam "existentialismum" sive atheismum profitentem sive saltem valori ratiocinii metaphysici adversantem, catholicus nemo in dubium revocare potest.

Ac denique philosophiae nostris traditae scholis hoc vitio vertunt, eam nempe in cognitionis processu ad intellectum unice respicere, neglecto munere voluntatis et affectuum animi. Quod quidem verum non est. Numquam enim christiana philosophia utilitatem negavit et efficacitatem bonarum totius animi dispositionum ad res religiosas ac morales plene cognoscendas et amplectendas; immo semper docuit huiuscemodi dispositionum defectum causam esse cur intellectus, cupiditatibus ac mala voluntate affectus, ita obscuretur ut non recte videat. Immo Doctor Communis censet intellectum altiora bona ad ordinem moralem sive naturalem sive supernaturalem pertinentia, aliquo modo percipere posse quatenus experientur in animo affectivam quamdam "connaturalitatem" cum eisdem bonis sive naturalem sive dono gratiae addi-

individuals and in the incessant flux of life. And while despising our philosophy, they extol others, ancient or modern, oriental or occidental, by which they seem to imply that any kind of philosophy or theory can, with a few additions or corrections if necessary, be harmonized with Catholic dogma. But this is absolutely false, especially where there is question of those fictitious theories which go by the name of immanentism or idealism or materialism, whether historic or dialectic, or also existentialism, whether atheistic or the type that denies at least the validity of metaphysical reasoning. No Catholic can have the least doubt on that score.

34. Finally, they reproach the philosophy taught in our schools that, in explaining the process of cognition, it takes into account the intellect alone, neglecting the function of the will and the emotions. This is simply untrue. Never has Christian philosophy denied the usefulness and efficacy of good dispositions of the whole soul for fully understanding and embracing moral and religious truths. On the contrary, it has always taught that the lack of such dispositions can be the reason why the intellect, influenced by passions and bad will, may be so darkened that it cannot see straight. Indeed, St. Thomas thinks that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural, in so far as the soul experiences a certain affective "connaturalness" to them, whether this "connaturalness" be

tam;<sup>10</sup> ac liquet quantopere vel subobscura huiusmodi cognitio investigationibus rationis auxilio esse valeat. Attamen aliud est voluntatis affectuum dispositioni vim agnoscere adiuvandi rationem ad certiorem ac firmiorem cognitionem rerum moralium assequendam; aliud vero est, quod isti novatores contendunt: facultatibus nempe appetendi et affectandi vim quamdam intuendi adiudicare, atque hominem, cum non possit rationis discursu cum certitudine discernere quidnam ut verum sit amplectendum, ad voluntatem declinare, qua inter oppositas opiniones ipse libere decernens eligat, cognitione et voluntatis actu incompte permixtis.

Nec mirum est novis hisce placitis in discrimen adduci duas philosophicas disciplinas quae natura sua cum fidei doctrina (p. 575) arcte conectuntur, theodiceam nempe et ethicam; quarum quidem munus esse censem non aliquid certi de Deo aliove ente transcendenti demonstrare, sed ostendere potius ea quae fides doceat de Deo personali ac de eius praceptis, cum vitae necessitatibus perfecte cohaerere, ideoque omnibus amplectenda esse ut desperatio arceatur atque aeterna attingatur salus. Quae omnia ut Decessorum Nostrorum Leonis XIII et Pii X documentis aperte adversantur, ita cum Concilii Vaticani decretis componi nequeunt. Has quidem a veritate aberrationes deploare supervacaneum esset si omnes, etiam in rebus philosophicis qua par est reverentia ad Magisterium

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<sup>10</sup> Cfr. S. Thom., Summa Theol., II-II, quaest. 1, art. 4 ad 3 et quaest. 45, art. 2 in c.

natural or the result of grace; it is clear how much even this somewhat obscure perception can aid reason in its investigations. But it is one thing to admit that the dispositions of the will can help reason to gain a surer and firmer grasp of moral truths; it is quite another thing to say, as these innovators do, that the appetitive and affective faculties have a certain power of intuition, and that man, unable to decide with certainty by using his reason what is to be accepted as true, turns to his will to choose freely among opposite opinions; that would be an incongruous confusion of cognition and an act of the will.

35. It is not surprising that these new theories endanger two philosophical departments which by their nature are closely connected with faith, that is, theodicy and ethics. According to the new views, their function is not to prove with certitude anything about God or any other transcendent being, but rather to show that truths which faith teaches about a personal God and about His precepts, correspond perfectly to the necessities of life, and are therefore to be accepted by all in order to avoid despair and to attain eternal salvation. All of which is evidently contrary to the documents of our predecessors, Leo XIII and Pius X, nor can it be reconciled with the decrees of the Vatican Council. It would indeed be unnecessary to deplore these aberrations from truth if all, even in the domain of philosophy, showed proper reverence for and paid attention to the Magisterium of the

Ecclesiae animum intenderent, cuius profecto est, ex divina institutione, non solum veritatis divinitus revelatae depositum custodire et interpretari, sed ipsis etiam philosophicis disciplinis invigilare ne quid detrimenti ex placitis non rectis catholica patientur dogmata.

Reliquum est ut aliquid de quaestionibus dicamus quae, quamvis spectent ad disciplinas quae "positivae" nuncupari solent, cum christiana tamen fidei veritatibus plus minusve coniectantur. Instanter enim non pauci ex postulant ut catholica religio earumdem disciplinarum quam plurimum rationem habeat. Quod sane laude dignum est ubi de factis agitur reapse demonstratis; caute tamen accipiendum est ubi potius de "hypothesibus" sit quaestio, etsi aliquo modo humana scientia innixis, quibus doctrina attingitur in Sacris Litteris vel in "traditione" contenta. Quodsi tales coniecturales opiniones doctrinae a Deo revelatae directe vel indirecte adversentur, tum huiusmodi postulatum nullo modo admitti potest.

Quamobrem Ecclesiae Magisterium non prohibet quominus "evolutionismi" doctrina, quatenus nempe de humani corporis origine inquirit ex iam existente ac vivente materia oriundi—animas enim a Deo immediate creari, catholica fides nos retinere iubet—pro hodierno humanarum disciplinarum et sacrae theologiae statu, investigationibus ac disputationibus peritorum in utroque campo hominum pertractetur; ita qui (p. 576) dem ut rationes utriusque opinionis, faventium nempe vel obstantium, debita cum gravitate moderatione ac temperantia perpen-

Church which has the divinely given mission not only to guard and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth, but also to watch over the philosophical sciences lest erroneous theories harm Catholic dogma.

36. Nothing now remains but to say a word about those problems which pertain to what are called the positive sciences, yet are more or less connected with the truths of Christian faith. Not a few demand insistently that Catholic religion take them into account as much as possible. This demand is certainly praiseworthy when there is question of clearly proved facts; but it must be advanced with caution when there is rather question of hypotheses which, while having some sort of scientific foundation, touch on doctrines contained in Sacred Scripture or in Tradition. If such conjectures are directly or indirectly opposed to a doctrine revealed by God, then the demand can in no way be allowed.

37. Accordingly, the Magisterium of the Church does not forbid that the theory of evolution concerning the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter—for Catholic faith obliges us to hold that the human soul is immediately created by God—be investigated and discussed by experts as far as the present state of human sciences and sacred theology allows. However, this must be done so that reasons for both sides, that is, those favorable and those unfavorable to evolution, be weighed and judged with the necessary gravity, modera-

dantur ac diiudicentur; dummodo omnes parati sint ad Ecclesiae iudicio obtemperandum, cui a Christo munus demandatum est et Sacras Scripturas authentice interpretandi et fidei dogmata tuendi.<sup>11</sup> Hanc tamen disceptandi libertatem nonnulli temerario ausu transgrediuntur, cum ita sese gerant quasi ipsa humani corporis origo ex iam existente ac vivente materia per indicia hucusque reperta ac per ratiocinia ex iisdem indiciis deducta, iam certa omnino sit ac demonstrata; atque ex divinae revelationis fontibus nihil habeatur quod in hac re maximam moderationem et cautelam exigat.

Cum vero de alia coniecturali opinione agitur, videlicet de polygenismo quem vocant, tum Ecclesiae filii eiusmodi libertate minime fruuntur. Non enim christifideles eam sententiam amplecti possunt quam qui retinent, asseverant vel post Adam hisce in terris veros homines exstitisse qui non ab eodem prouti omnium protoparente naturali generatione originem duxerint, vel Adam significare multitudinem quamdam protoparentum; cum nequaquam appareat quomodo huiusmodi sententia componi queat cum iis quae fontes revelatae veritatis et acta Magisterii Ecclesiae proponunt de peccato originali, quod procedit ex peccato vere commisso ab uno Adamo, quodque generatione in omnes transfusum, inest unicuique proprium.<sup>12</sup>

Quemadmodum autem in biologicis et anthropologicis

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Allocut. Pont. ad membra Academiae Scientiarum, 30 novembris 1941; A.A.S., vol. XXXIII, p. 506.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. Rom., V, 12-19; Conc. Trid., sess. V, can. 1-4.

tion and discretion; and let all be prepared to submit to the judgment of the Church to whom Christ has given the mission of interpreting authentically the Sacred Scriptures and of safeguarding the dogmas of faith. On the other hand, those go too far and transgress this liberty of discussion who act as if the origin of the human body from pre-existing and living matter were already fully demonstrated by the facts discovered up to now and by reasoning on them, and as if there were nothing in the sources of divine revelation which demanded the greatest reserve and caution in this controversy.

38. But as regards another conjecture, namely so-called polygenism, the children of the Church by no means enjoy the same liberty. No Catholic can hold that after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that Adam is merely a symbol for a number of first parents. For it is unintelligible how such an opinion can be squared with what the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Magisterium of the Church teach on original sin, which proceeds from sin actually committed by an individual Adam, and which, passed on to all by way of generation, is in everyone as his own.

39. Just as in the biological and anthropological

disciplinis, ita etiam in historicis sunt qui limites et cautelas ab Ecclesia statuta audacter transgrediantur. Ac peculiari modo deploranda est quaedam nimio liberior libros historicos Veteris Testamenti interpretandi ratio, cuius fautores Epistulam haud ita multo ante a Pontificio Consilio de re biblica Archiepiscopo Parisiensi datam ad suam defendendam causam immerito referunt.<sup>18</sup> Haec enim Epistula aperte monet undecim priora ca (p. 577) pita Geneseos, quamvis cum historicae compositionis rationibus proprie non convenient, quibus eximii rerum gestarum scriptores graeci et latini, vel nostrae aetatis periti usi fuerint, nihilominus quodam vero sensu, exegetis amplius investigando ac determinando, ad genus historiae pertinere; eademque capita, oratione simplici ac figurata mentique populi parum exulti accommodata, tum praecipuas veritates referre quibus aeterna nostra procuranda salus innitur, tum etiam popularem descriptionem originis generis humani populique electi. Si quid autem hagiographi antiqui ex narrationibus popularibus hauserint (quod quidem concedi potest), numquam obliviscendum est eos ita euisse divinae inspirationis afflatu adiutos, quo in seligendis ac diiudicandis documentis illis ab omni errore immunes prae-muniebantur.

Quae autem ex popularibus narrationibus in Sacris Litteris recepta sunt, ea cum mythologiis aliisve id genus minime aequanda sunt, quae magis ex effusa imaginatione procedunt quam ex illo veritatis ac simplicitatis studio

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<sup>18</sup> Die 16 ianuarii 1948; A.A.S., vol. XL, pp. 45-48.

sciences, so also in history there are those who boldly flout the limits and safeguards set up by the Church. Deplorable in particular is a certain fashion of interpreting too freely the historical books of the Old Testament. They wrongly quote in their favor a letter which the Pontifical Commission on Biblical Studies sent not long ago to the Archbishop of Paris. But this letter clearly points out that the first eleven chapters of Genesis, although they do not properly conform to the rules of historical composition used by the great Greek and Latin historians or by the historians of our time, do nevertheless pertain to history in a true sense to be further studied and determined by exegetes; that letter also says that the same chapters contain, in simple and metaphorical language adapted to the mentality of a people of low culture, the principal truths fundamental for our eternal salvation and a popular description of the origin of the human race and the chosen people. For the rest, if the ancient hagiographers have taken anything from popular narratives (and this may be conceded), we must not forget that they did so with the help of divine inspiration which preserved them from error in selecting and appraising those documents.

40. In any case, whatever of popular narratives have found a place in the Sacred Scriptures, must in no way be considered on a par with myths or other such things; these are more the product of an exuberant imagination than of that striving for truth and simplicity which is

quod in Sacris Libris Veteris etiam Testamenti adeo elucet ut hagiographi nostri antiquos profanos scriptores aperte praecellere dicendi sint.

Novimus quidem plerosque catholicos doctores, quorum studiorum fructus in athenaeis, in sacris seminariis et religiosorum sodalium collegiis impertiuntur, ab iis erroribus alienos esse, qui hodie, sive ob rerum novarum cupidinem sive etiam ob immoderatum quoddam apostolatus propositum, aperte vel latenter divulgantur. At novimus quoque novas eiusmodi opiniones incautos allicere posse; ideoque principiis obstante malumus, quam inveterato iam morbo medicinam praestare.

Quapropter, re coram Domino mature perpensa ac considerata, ne a sacro Nostro officio deficiamus, Episcopis ac Religiosarum Sodalitatum Moderatoribus, gravissime eorum onerata conscientia, praecipimus ut quam diligenter tamen curent ne in scholis, in coetibus, in scriptis quibuslibet opiniones huiusmodi proferantur, neve clericis vel christifidelibus quovis modo tradantur.

(p. 578) Qui in ecclesiasticis institutis docent, noverint se tuta conscientia munus docendi sibi concreditum exercere non posse nisi doctrinae normas quas ediximus, religiose accipient atque ad amussim servent in discipulis instituendis. Debitam reverentiam atque obtemperationem, quam in suo adsiduo labore Ecclesiae Magisterio profiteantur oportet, discipulorum quoque mentibus animisque instillent.

so apparent in the Sacred Books, also of the Old Testament, that our hagiographers must be regarded as decidedly superior to the profane writers of antiquity.

41. We are certainly aware that the majority of Catholic teachers, whose studies benefit universities, seminaries and colleges of the religious, are far removed from those errors which are being spread today either openly or covertly, whether through an urge of novelty or through ill-considered plans for an apostolate. But we also know that such new theories can entice the unwary; and therefore we prefer to withstand the very beginnings rather than administer medicine after the disease has grown inveterate.

42. Therefore, after mature reflection and consideration before God, that we may not be wanting in our sacred duty, we charge Bishops and Superiors of religious orders, binding them most seriously in conscience, to watch carefully lest such opinions be aired in schools, in conferences or in writings of any kind, and lest they be taught in any manner whatsoever to clergy or laity.

43. Let professors in ecclesiastical institutes remember that they cannot with tranquil conscience exercise the office of teaching entrusted to them unless they religiously accept the doctrinal norms which we have laid down and exactly observe them in the instruction of their students. Let them likewise instil into the minds and hearts of their pupils the reverence and submission due to the Magisterium of the Church which should guide them in their own daily labor.

Nitantur utique omni vi omniisque contentione ut disciplinas quas tradunt, provehant; sed caveant etiam ne limites transgrediantur a Nobis statutos ad veritatem fidei ac doctrinae catholicae tuendam. In quaestiones novas quas hodierna cultura ac progrediens aetas in medium protulerunt, diligentissimam suam conferant pervestigationem, sed ea qua par est prudentia et cautela; nec denique putent, falso "irenismo" indulgentes, ad Ecclesiae sinum dissidentes et errantes feliciter reduci posse nisi integra veritas in Ecclesia vivens, absque ulla corruptione detractioneque, sincere omnibus tradatur.

Hac spe freti, quam pastoralis vestra sollertia adauget, caelestium munerum auspicem paternaeque benevolentiae Nostrae testem, cum vobis singulis universis, Venerabiles Fratres, tum clero populoque vestro Apostolicam Benedictionem amantissime impertimus.

Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die XII mensis Augusti, anno MDCCCCCL, Pontificatus Nostri duodecimo.

PIUS PP. XII

44. Let them strive with all their energy and zeal to further the progress of the sciences which they teach; but let them also guard against overstepping the limits which we have established for the protection of the truth of the Catholic faith and doctrine. When face to face with the new problems that are posed by modern culture and progress, let them engage in diligent research, but with the necessary prudence and caution; finally let them not indulge in a false irenicism or think that the dissident and erring can happily be brought back to the bosom of the Church if the whole truth found in the Church is not sincerely taught to all without corruption and diminution.

45. With this hope and relying on your pastoral solicitude, as a pledge of celestial gifts and a sign of our paternal benevolence, We impart with all our heart to each and all of you, Venerable Brethren, as well as to your clergy and people, the Apostolic Blessing.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, August 12, 1950, the 12th year of Our Pontificate.

PIUS XII, POPE



1. 1990 & 1991



Before we enter on the commentary proper, something must be said about the background, general purpose and addressees of the Encyclical.

1. Long before *Humani generis* appeared in the middle of August 1950, rumors were rife in Europe about an eventual papal pronouncement. Controversies had been going on for some years among Catholic theologians which concerned the very foundations of theology. The first inkling of a coming papal action seems to have been the address in which the Pope spoke to the Procurators of the Society of Jesus assembled at Rome for the election of a new General (Sept. 17, 1946). After urging them on to promote science as much as possible, he continued: "Much has been said, not always very clearly, about a 'new theology', which should keep moving where everything else is moving, always on the way, never arriving. If we were to accept such an idea, what would become of the immutability of Catholic dogma, of the unity and stability of our faith? . . . When there is question of new or freely disputed problems, the principles of Catholic doctrine must be the guiding light; what sounds altogether new in theology, should be examined carefully and cautiously; what is certain and firmly established, should be distinguished from conjectures, from ephemeral and not always laudable fashions introduced into theology and philosophy." One brief hint also touched on the irenicism of which our Encyclical speaks: "Let us stretch out

a loving hand to the erring, but let us have no compromise with error." (Acta Apost. Sedis 1946 p. 385)

A few days afterwards (Sept. 22, 1946), the Pope addressed the general Chapter of the Dominicans, likewise assembled at Rome to elect a new General. After recalling that their illustrious order had given to the Church St. Thomas Aquinas, he admonished them to tone down intra-mural controversies, that is, to emphasize less things freely disputed among Catholics and to adopt gladly what modern science has to offer. The things at stake today, he continued, are the very foundations of philosophy and theology, the relation between science and faith, the foundations of faith itself, the intelligibility of divine revelation. The task today is to show that the structure reared by St. Thomas rests on solid rock, that it is still efficacious for defending the deposit of faith, and that it is fit to serve and direct safe progress in philosophy and theology. (Acta Apost. Sedis 1946 p. 387)

Two months later (Nov. 21, 1946), speaking to the members of the International Congress of philosophy, the Pope again stressed the necessity of having a solid intellectual basis for Catholic philosophy against the philosophy of despair called existentialism. (Acta Apost. Sedis 1946 p. 428-9)

These addresses furnish conclusive proof that *Humani generis* was not dashed off on the spur of the moment, but was the mature fruit of reflection over a number of years.

2. There is little difficulty in assessing the sum and substance of the Encyclical. It evidently deals with certain erroneous theories of the present time, their causes and

effects, and the remedy for them. And since the first eight paragraphs are clearly marked off from the bulk of the Encyclical, we may divide the errors discussed into those of non-Catholic circles, and those, not of Catholic theology itself, but of some Catholic theologians, philosophers, scientists and historians. As will be seen, the two classes are neither entirely the same nor yet altogether different.

But though a superficial reading may leave the impression that the Encyclical is mainly negative, condemning modern errors and erroneous tendencies, a more attentive study should correct that impression. All through its pages the Pope appears far more concerned with putting before the reader the positive norms which should guide Catholic scholars in their work. I should say that the modern trends were only the occasion for him to inculcate the positive doctrine of the Church, in particular on the *teaching authority of the living Magisterium*, which some Catholics had flouted in their writings and lectures. It is for this positive doctrine that *Humani generis* will be remembered long after the glittering theories condemned in it are buried and forgotten.

3. As is usual with Encyclicals, *Humani generis*, too, is addressed to the Catholic Bishops of the world. The Pope as the supreme teacher of the Catholic Church wishes to alert the pastors of the particular flocks to be on their guard against a "new theology". Yet, as he does not mention by name any of the aberrant Catholic scholars, so he does not name any particular diocese or country in which the errors censured may have gained a foothold.

But he desires all-around vigilance because the path of error, like that of a forest fire, is unpredictable.

The Encyclical is not directly addressed to the heads of exempt religious orders. However, they are bracketed with the Bishops in the peroration as sharing their responsibility.

## DISCORD AND ERROR (1)

As in a Homeric poem, the very first words strike the key-note of the Encyclical. Needless to say, the Pope is not worried about errors except those which touch on faith and morals. But as the interpreter of divine revelation and the guardian of the moral law, whether natural or supernatural, he feels bound to raise his voice when he sees "the very principles of Christian culture" neglected or denied. They are the principles of "Christian philosophy" (34) without which no stable Christian culture or civilization can flourish. But these are flouted today in the family, in civil society, in international relations. Instead, the insistent yet ever-changing slogans of modern propaganda have won out over immutable principles, keeping modern masses and their leaders undecided and fretful. Hence discord and error, as the Pope pointed out in his first Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, Oct. 20, 1939.

After briefly discussing modern errors outside the Catholic Church, he passes on to "errors and dangers of error" within the Catholic Church.

## A. ERRORS AMONG NON-CATHOLICS (2-8)

The Encyclical enumerates three errors current among non-Catholics: the theory of universal evolution, historicism, the rejection of all teaching authority in matters of religion and morals. The causes named are two: the native weakness of the human intellect and the psychological obstacles to faith. One effect is the prevalence of grave philosophical errors like idealism, immanentism, pragmatism, and now the latest philosophical fad called existentialism, all of which end in relativism. Another effect is widespread disagreement among non-Catholics in religious matters. The only remedy is a return to divine revelation and a living Magisterium.

Though this is not the principal part of the Encyclical, yet a few remarks on the Pope's diagnosis of present-day ills seem appropriate.

### 1. *Moral Necessity of Revelation (2-3)*

This is a thesis based on the Vatican Council (Denzinger 1796) and common among Catholic theologians. Human reason can, by its natural powers, arrive at a certain knowledge of the most fundamental religious and moral truths (existence of God, moral law). Hence, as theologians say, there is no physical necessity of revelation. However, in the present condition of mankind as known from history, unless God had vouchsafed us His revelation, not all men could (as they should) know these truths with ease, with certitude and without any ad-

mixture of error. The Encyclical enumerates three obstacles to such universal knowledge: the truths themselves lie beyond the range of the senses; their practical application calls for severe self-control; man's evil inclinations ("prejudice or passion or bad faith") tend to interfere with a right judgment. "As a result, men readily persuade themselves in such matters that what they do not wish to be true, is false or doubtful."

As is well known, St. Thomas (*Contra gentiles* I c. 4) has three other reasons for the moral necessity of revelation: lack of leisure for a serious study of these fundamental truths, lack of interest, lack of mental equipment. The difference in the reasons assigned seems to lie in this that the Encyclical speaks of non-Catholic theologians or scholars whereas St. Thomas had in mind the generality of the human race.

## 2. *Catholic Evidence* (4)

In the present order of things, all men, none excepted, are called to membership in the Catholic Church, in which knowledge of these fundamental truths is easily had. But the obstacles enumerated also interfere with the study of Catholic evidence, that is, of "the credibility of the Catholic faith". As Catholic apologetics shows, there are a number of convincing arguments in proof of it. The Encyclical mentions only one, the "wonderful external signs", which guarantee the divine origin of the Catholic religion. This is the argument from miracles, the one which has always been placed first in modern apologetics and which was sanctioned by the Vatican Council (Den-

zinger 1790, 1794, 1812, 1813). In spite of the modern aversion to a consideration of miracles, the Encyclical asserts that this argument can create certitude in the honest inquirer, and this without the aid of special divine illumination. This latter point, the need of special illumination to see the force of our apologetic arguments, occurs again in a later section (28) where the erroneous views of some Catholic theologians are detailed. And again such a need is denied.

But this is not saying that God leaves the sincere inquirer alone in his search after the true religion, or that the result of purely natural reasoning, even when based on miracles, is a salutary act of faith. God aids all who seek Him, and He stirs their hearts by "supernal whisperings". But assent to the credibility of the Christian faith could be a purely natural act based on purely natural reason, whereas faith is a supernatural assent based on the authority of God revealing.

### 3. *Evolution (5-6)*

As was to be expected, the subject of evolution occurs more than once in the Encyclical. While the theory of evolution has many facets, four are here mentioned. First of all, the theory is not yet "fully proved even in the domain of natural sciences"; science therefore should regard it in its own field as a mere hypothesis, not an established dogma (37). Secondly, what is reprehensible, is that evolution is proclaimed as the ultimate explanation of the "origin of all things": of the world, of the different classes of beings, such as plants, animals, men; of the

different grades of existence, such as life, consciousness, thought, religion, society and so on. Evolution as such explains nothing; whatever evolution there is, must be traced back to its causes if we wish to understand it. Thirdly, in its extreme form, the theory of evolution becomes monistic and pantheistic, implying that all things, God and creature, are made of the same stuff and that therefore everything is divine. No sane person, let alone a trained philosopher or theologian, could subscribe to such an identification. What is condemned lastly is that the theory leaves nothing stable in the universe; it negates the validity of our universal concepts and the existence of immutable essences. It is absolute relativism, a return to Heraclitus' first principle of the universal flux.

As the Encyclical supposes that non-Catholic theologians are not communists, it can use the theory of evolution as an *argumentum ad hominem* or *ad verecundiam*. They should shy away from it seeing that communists use it effectively to propagate their dialectical materialism (5).

#### 4. *Philosophical Errors (6-7)*

Apart from evolution in its extreme form, the errors here condemned are: idealism, immanentism, pragmatism, existentialism and its prolongation which is historicism. They are not condemned directly, but indirectly. They are supposed to be admittedly erroneous and on a par with existentialism, for which the way was paved by the theory of evolution.

It is not quite clear what precisely is meant by the three

systems of idealism, immanentism and pragmatism, since these labels do not always have the same meaning in modern philosophical language. However, we may say that idealism is wrong because it leaves us with nothing real, immanentism because it identifies God and man, pragmatism because it perverts the very notion of truth.

Existentialism is described as the doctrine which "forgetful of the immutable essences of things, concerns itself only with individual existence" (6). The same idea appears again in a later section (33), where two types are distinguished: atheistic and anti-metaphysical existentialism. Elsewhere (35) a kind of practical apologetics, which has been thought up to meet the atheistic type leading to despair, is rejected.

The Pope had already spoken of the same two types of existentialism in his address to the International Congress of philosophy mentioned before. He there asked: "What else but despair is left to a philosophy which does not find its answers in God, in eternity, in personal immortality?" The answer certainly is not a pessimistic irrationalism, which rejects metaphysical reasoning, nor a religious voluntarism. For "the will cannot remain steadfast in the vicissitudes of life unless it is based on a profound intellectual conviction." (Acta Apost. Sedis 1946 p. 428-9)

Four months after the Encyclical the Pope spoke again of existentialism when addressing the Congress of religious (Acta Apost. Sedis 1951 p. 26-36). His words on that occasion are worth pondering because they lay bare the causes of the present vogue of existentialism. "It is not by chance, he then said, that our age has seen the birth

and spread of that philosophy which has been given the name of 'existentialism'. Men today, living in a time which forces on them stubborn metaphysical and religious questions, prefer to forget the highest realities and confine themselves to the actually present. But one who values his supernatural faith, does not consent, for the sake of such theories, to think only of the passing moment and to be carried away by the flux of life. He knows that the unseen (Hebr. 11, 1) is of sovereign worth, the sovereign truth and destined to endure forever. Alas, although warnings and admonitions were not lacking, the contagion of these doctrines has seriously affected members of the clergy, religious not excepted; and while these do not go so far as to deny the suprasensible and supernatural realities altogether, they undervalue their importance."

Historicism (7) may be regarded as an antecedent and an extension of existentialism. The existentialist of today looks at himself and at life and sees nothing but change in both; he also becomes keenly aware of his utter inability to control or comprehend them. Hence despair. In the 19th century history as well as the historical evolution of all ideas and institutions was studied intensively. At the same time, rationalism, the denial of revelation, became the hallmark of university instruction. The two tendencies worked hand in hand to destroy all belief in principles universally valid and immutable. And so, with the lights in the heavens extinguished and the waves of uncertainty mounting ever higher, man knows not whither he is drifting in the restless sea of time.

But any of these philosophical systems would make all truth relative; human thought would be without anything "absolute, firm and immutable"—a position hardly a step removed from agnosticism and universal skepticism.

### 5. *Dialectical Theology* (8)

This title now in common use to designate the latest form of Protestant theology does not occur here. As throughout the Encyclical, no names are mentioned, but we cannot be far wrong if, in the context, we think of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, the protagonists of dialectical theology or the theology of crisis as it is also called. A reaction against 19th century rationalism, this theology is praised for its staunch adherence to Scripture as the word of God. At the same time, the Encyclical deplores the fact that it belittles human reason, an inheritance from Luther, and that it has no use for the teaching authority instituted by Christ. In the latter years, the two protagonists had a violent falling out which was aired in public, and the Encyclical seems to allude to this rift to press home the need of a higher authority, a living Magisterium. The Bible alone cannot suffice since both sides to the dispute base themselves on it and yet cannot agree.

## B. ERRORS WITHIN THE CHURCH (9-40)

Consideration of the errors prevalent among non-Catholic theologians and scholars merely serves as an introduction to the main theme, which is an examination of erroneous views and devious trends manifesting themselves among "professors in ecclesiastical institutions" (43). One might possibly expect that the Pope, in accordance with Canon Law (can. 1399, 2; 1405), would warn them to keep away from writings in which non-Catholics spread and defend their errors. Quite the contrary. He declares it their duty to know those errors, nay, to be familiar with them. This for three reasons: Catholic scholars are expected to answer them; the errors may contain a grain of truth; and they may be the occasion for scrutinizing more closely certain philosophical and theological tenets.

There is, however, the danger that Catholics, too, may in the process be infected by the spirit behind them, which is relativism, in our case, dogmatic relativism.

As for the erroneous views found among Catholics, the Encyclical insists more than once that they are not widespread (10, 28, 41). There is no question yet of an epidemic as was the case with modernism 50 years ago, but of an intellectual ferment or ailment, a feeling of uneasiness and discomfort. Nor is there question of a definite program, a new system either developed or developing, but of a few unhealthy tendencies. But because these are insidious enough to entice the unwary, "we

prefer to withstand the very beginnings rather than administer medicine after the disease has grown inveterate" (41).

## I. ERRORS IN THEOLOGY (10-28)

The errors among Catholic theologians are many, and we shall meet them as we go along (22-28). Their causes, according to the Encyclical, are mainly two: a craving for novelty and an imprudent zeal for souls. The ultimate effect is dogmatic relativism (16). The remedy is closer adherence to the teaching of the Magisterium and to the common doctrines of scholastic theology (16-21).

### 1. Devious Trends (10-15)

The Encyclical begins this section with pointing out two causes of Catholic aberrations and then passes on to the specific demands of the "new theology".

#### 1. *Craving for Novelty* (10, 41)

This unhealthy tendency is nothing new. It existed already in apostolic times as we learn from St. Paul who warned Timothy against it (1 Tim. 1, 37; cf. Rom. 16, 17; Col. 2, 1-13; Apoc. 2, 14-6). Today it manifests itself in two ways: in the dread of being thought ignorant of the latest scientific findings (38, 39), and in a gradual withdrawal from the paternal guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, whose solemn duty it is to preserve the teachings handed on from the Apostles. Those who yield to this craving, are prone to look upon the Magisterium as a "hindrance to progress" (18). They may stop short

of evident heresies, but do not mind embracing doctrines which the consent of theologians labels more or less heretical (*proxima haeresi*). And if the Holy See intervenes, its pronouncements are simply "ignored as if they did not exist". Such an attitude shows not only disdain for scholastic theology (18) and philosophy (31, 35), but also a callous contempt for the Magisterium (18).

Many particular instances which the Pope seems to have had in mind when penning these sorrowful lines, occur in later sections (18, 22, 23, 25-27).

It is interesting to compare with all this what the Pope wrote a month later in his *Adhortatio Apostolica Menti nostrae* of Sept. 23, 1950. That document, unlike the Encyclical, was directly addressed to all Catholic priests and is intensely practical, that is, meant for the daily life of the parish priest. He there warns priests that "novelty as such is no criterion of truth" (*per se novitas neutiquam est veritatis indicium*). Novelties in the priest's mode of life are acceptable only if they confirm truth and promote honesty and virtue. The Pope then goes on to point out a number of current ideas and practices which are unacceptable when judged by this standard.

The craving for novelty was again mentioned in the Pope's address to the Congress of religious (Dec. 8, 1950), this time as it manifests itself among religious. Referring explicitly to what he said in this Encyclical, he made a distinction. Catholic faith and the fundamental principles of religious life, among them perfect self-denial for the love of Christ, must remain unaltered. "These do not change in the ever changing scene." But the work to

which religious dedicate themselves, must be adapted to modern needs. (Cf. B. Lavaud, in *Revue Thomiste* 1951 p. 153-161)

These passages clearly show that the Pope does not advocate a blind rejection of whatever is new. In his Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* he warned Catholics against that "intemperate zeal which imagines that whatever is new, should for that reason be opposed or suspected". He there spoke of Scripture scholars who seek new solutions for long-felt biblical difficulties; he not only encouraged them to persevere in their arduous labors, but also exhorted Catholics to judge them "not only with equity and justice, but also with the greatest charity". He would certainly wish us to observe the same attitude toward theologians in general. The important point for them, however, is to know when and where to draw the line between the new that is acceptable from the Catholic standpoint and the new that is inadmissible.

## 2. *False Irenicism* (11)

Far more than the itch for novelty, the Encyclical fears the baleful influence of an imprudent irenicism. It is mentioned explicitly three times (11, 12, 44), implicitly elsewhere. Its aim is laudable indeed, viz. that of breaking down "the barriers that divide good and honest men" so as to establish a united front "against the onrush of atheism". But the means which its patrons advocate for that purpose, are less laudable; in order to achieve unity, they would sacrifice Catholic dogma, hiding it or minimizing it or even corrupting it. Such an attempt is denounced

as abortive. It might gather lost sheep, but outside the one fold; it might "bring about the union of all, but only in a common ruin" (12).

In *Unitas* (1950 p. 263) Fr. Charles Boyer, S.J., instances another method of imprudent irenicism. It consists in throwing into high relief and even exaggerating the wrongs, deficiencies and faults of Catholics while displaying undue indulgence and admiration for dissenters. Such a procedure naturally discourages Catholics and provides dissidents with arguments for justifying their past and for remaining in their present state.

We may add another instance of a false irenicism, for which a book was put on the Index Oct. 2, 1950, less than two months after the Encyclical, though the book itself had been published in 1947. As we know, Protestants have a special aversion to the Catholic Church on account of her juridical order, canon law as distinct from divine law. In order therefore to pave the way for reunion, the author of the book sets out to show that the whole of ecclesiastical or canon law is a perversion of evangelical liberty, an abuse fostered by canonists of the early middle ages (*Monitor Ecclesiasticus* 1950 p. 537-540).

This is not putting the ban on all attempts at union or reunion. There is such a thing as a prudent irenicism. The present Pope has more than once made appeals to non-Catholics, and the Holy Office published instructions on the manner of dealing with our separated brethren (Sept. 20, 1949). But these must be told the truth of Catholic dogma, the whole truth, nothing but the truth (44).

### 3. *The New Theology* (11-16)

Again without mentioning any names or books or reviews, the Encyclical goes on to outline the changes which some want to see introduced into Catholic theology.

One general demand is for an over-all reform or remaking of the course of theology as taught in our seminaries (11). It is not clear whether this refers to the whole course under all its aspects (22-28) or only or principally to the particular innovations mentioned in the next three paragraphs (12-15). The proposal is not rejected outright, but a distinction is made between what is good in it and what is vicious. Improvements on methodological and pedagogical lines evidently would be welcome, but there can be no tampering with revealed truth and divine institutions.

In one poignant paragraph (13) the Pope complains of the underground propaganda which is carried on in favor of these ambivalent innovations, and which has already filtered down to seminarians and the Catholic laity.

A more particular demand, though pervading all branches of theology, concerns the concepts and terms proper to scholastic theology. These, the innovators say, should be scrapped. The Encyclical does not give a list or examples of what terms are specifically objected to, but we may think of substance, person and nature, transubstantiation (26), eucharistic species, form and formal cause, *ex opere operato*, etc. The principal ground for objecting to them is that one would look in vain for them in Scripture, at least with their present scholastic connotations.

But what is to take their place?

Some advise theologians to go back to the terminology found in Scripture and the Fathers as being closer to the original revelation (14, 18). This suggestion does not stem from a craving for novelty, but from zeal for the conversion of dissidents (orthodox Protestants, Greek schismatics). For since these admit Scripture and the Fathers, use of the same terminology taken from these sources would, it is argued, facilitate eventual reunion. Why oblige them to profess that the sacraments work *ex opere operato*? Neither the Bible nor the Fathers know anything of it.

Others, more radical and obeying the urge of novelty, demand that theology adopt the categories of modern thought (15). They argue that this would be in perfect accord with what the history of dogma teaches us. The Fathers of the Church expressed dogma in concepts and terms borrowed from Platonism or Neo-Platonism, the philosophy in vogue at their time; the medieval Scholastics leaned heavily on Aristotle's philosophy, believing that, with its help, they could advance the understanding of dogma. What then is to prevent present-day theologians to make use of the categories of modern thought for the same purpose?

Lastly, there are those who deny altogether that the mysteries of faith can be expressed in human concepts that would be adequate and therefore immutable; they even go so far as to maintain that human language necessarily distorts them. And they conclude that the only remedy for this sad plight is to express the same mystery

in different ways, even in ways which may appear mutually contradictory (15).

We may anticipate here what the Encyclical says a little later (18) about the contempt shown for the Magisterium, a contributing factor of the new theology. For giving its approval to scholastic theology as taught at present, the Magisterium is pilloried by the innovators as an enemy of progress, and by non-Catholics as "an unjust restraint which prevents better qualified theologians from reforming their science" in accordance with the revolutionary ideas proposed.

## 2. Corrective Principles (16-21)

Whereas the preceding section was mostly negative, the one which follows is decidedly positive and lays down, in a clear and forthright manner, the principles which should guide the theologians in their research and by which the new theology is to be judged.

### 1. *Consent of Scholastics* (16-18)

After briefly noting that the demands of the new theology are nothing short of dogmatic relativism, the Encyclical outlines the positive reasons why they are unacceptable. There is a close bond between the common doctrine of theologians and scholastic terminology; both are the result of centuries of concerted effort to gain a better understanding of dogma; the greatest Catholic minds of the last thousand years have contributed to make them what they are; general councils have frequently

adopted them both. And while scholastic terminology is not of itself immutable, it rests on foundations certainly more solid than the flimsy and ephemeral structures of modern thought.

All in all, this reply to the demands of the new theology contains not only a high encomium, but also an authoritative approval of systematic or scholastic theology strictly so called (18), more particularly of doctrines which bear the stamp "*theologice certa*" or "*certa et communis*". Even a rash change of the terminology in which scholastic theology clothes its doctrines, is fraught with danger.

We do not overrate the Encyclical if we describe it as the Magna Charta of scholastic theology as constituted at present. The professor of dogma who would be so unconscionable as to ignore its admonitions in his lectures by brushing aside or disparaging scholastic theology, had better resign or be discharged. He certainly could not carry on with a "tranquil conscience" (43).

Truth to tell, this is not the first time that Rome had to vindicate scholastic theology against unwarranted attacks on the part of Catholics. It is a curious phenomenon of history that antagonism to scholasticism has sprung up almost every century since the middle ages. Because of the vicious diatribes of the humanists of the 15th century, St. Ignatius inserted esteem for scholastic theology among his rules for thinking with the Church. Late in the 18th century, the spirit of antischolasticism, rife among Jansenists and Febronians and adopted by the Synod of Pistoia, was exorcised by Pope Pius VI (Denzinger 1576, 1579). Just a hundred years ago, Pius IX found it neces-

sary to defend scholasticism against Bonnetty, Hermes and Günther (Denzinger 1652, 1657, 1680). At the beginning of this century, the Holy Office rejected the modernist accusations against scholastic exegesis (Denzinger 2048, 2061). Scholastic theologians now are grateful to Pius XII that he took the antischolasticism of the "new theology" for an occasion to proclaim anew, positively and emphatically, the merits of their science.

## 2. *Rule of Faith* (18)

No doctrine is repeated and insisted on so often in the Encyclical as that of the teaching authority of the Magisterium in the Catholic Church (8, 10, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 30, 32, 35, 37, 38, 43). As all theologians know, this authority may be exercised solemnly (as in papal definitions) or in the course of the ordinary teaching (as in encyclicals). The subject matter in both is the same: faith and morals; the difference lies in the mode of teaching.

The infallible teaching of the ever living Magisterium is "the criterion of truth", or, as theologians say, the rule of Catholic faith. It is the duty of the Magisterium actually teaching to tell each and every one of the faithful what they must believe as of divine faith. The rule of faith is not Scripture; that was the error of the Protestants. The rule of faith is not the Magisterium of the past centuries; that was the error of the Greek schismatics, who took the first seven Councils for their rule of faith; it was also the error of the Old Catholics when they rejected the Immaculate Conception and the in-

fallibility of the Pope because these doctrines had not been proposed to them before as of faith.

The Encyclical is unique in that it twice uses the expression "living" Magisterium (8, 21). The adjective is a refinement of the simple "Magisterium" which the theologian meets so often, both in this and in other ecclesiastical documents, where it may refer to the Magisterium of the past or to the Magisterium actually teaching.

What is meant by the "universal" rule of faith? The Encyclical does not explain. The adjective might refer to the content of divine faith, inasmuch as the living Magisterium teaches, explicitly or implicitly, all that is to be believed of divine faith. It may also refer to the universal Church, inasmuch as all Catholics, clergy and laity, are obliged to profess whatever the living Magisterium proposes as of faith. As regards the adjective "proximate", it is probably meant in the sense generally given to it by theologians, viz. a norm sufficient and applicable to all Catholics, so that no scientific investigation or justification on their part is needed. Since Nov. 1, 1950, Catholics do not believe in the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on the strength of the arguments set forth in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, but simply because the infallible voice of the Vicar of Christ has told them that this doctrine is of Catholic faith. Theologians, of course, analyze these arguments, evaluate their force and draw further conclusions, but they first accept the doctrine itself as *de fide divina et catholica*.

### 3. *Immutability of Dogma* (12, 21)

If the living Magisterium is infallible as the rule of faith, it follows that whatever has been proposed in the past as of divine faith, remains so until the end of time. These are the dogmas of the Catholic faith; the Magisterium living today teaches them all at least *in globo*, and the faithful believe them as of divine faith. Of all of them is true what St. Athanasius said so beautifully of the definition of Nicea: "*Domini verbum per oecumenicam nicaenam synodum prolatum in aeternum manet*" (Ep. ad Afros 2).

That implies that the meaning, the sense which the Magisterium had in mind when formulating them, cannot be altered. This was defined by the Vatican Council against Günther (Denzinger 1818). Therefore, if in a translation the words of a dogma are changed (as they must), the meaning of a dogma as understood originally must remain the same. For if the meaning were changed, it would no longer be the same dogma. For the same reason, it must be the primary concern of the professor of theology, the preacher, the missionary, the catechist, the Catholic journalist to keep a firm grasp on the true sense of the dogmas which each explains to his audience in his own way or applies to conditions perhaps not yet visualized when the dogma was formulated.

This brings us to the very heart of the "new theology": the problem of accommodation or adaptation. No doubt, the missionary must adopt the language of those whom he seeks to instruct; he must be familiar with their patterns of speech and thought. No foreign missionary, I

dare say, is unaware of this necessity, as also of the difficulty involved in making the Catholic faith palatable and digestible without disintegration. It was unfortunate that the "new theology" did not find the correct solution of this problem. Pius XII gave it in the address, already mentioned, to the Procurators of the Society of Jesus: "Those who write or teach" he told them, "should speak so as to be understood and heard gladly. That means that they should know how to accommodate themselves to the genius and ideas of their time in the choice and handling of themes, in the marshalling of their arguments, in their manner of presentation. But let no one disturb or change what is unchangeable" (AAS 1946 p. 384-5). The truth, the sense of the Catholic faith must remain unaltered no matter how its presentation may vary with time and place.

#### 4. *Dogmatic Progress (21)*

In spite of this immutability, dogmatic progress is possible, a development of dogma under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because the same truth may be explicit or implicit, the Magisterium has, in the course of the centuries, expressed more clearly, more explicitly, more distinctly what is perhaps contained in Scripture or in the earlier documents of Tradition obscurely, implicitly, indistinctly. It is the grand but gradual fulfilment of the promise in which Our Lord told the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 16, 13). The later dogmatic formulas do not alter the deposit of faith or add to it; they merely make explicit what was contained in it implicitly. As in every other department

of knowledge, this represents true progress in understanding revelation. An ideal case history is the development of the dogma of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin as outlined in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*.

It may have taken a long time before the correct formula was found. Often there were long discussions and controversies as was the case with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and even with truths revealed explicitly (e.g. the Trinity, Incarnation, infallibility of the Pope). But a new dogma is more than the natural conclusion of theological discussions; it is the result of the perpetual vigilance of the Magisterium over the deposit of faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And its truth is guaranteed by the assistance of the same Spirit promised to the Magisterium.

### 5. *History of Dogma* (15, 21)

All this leads to a better understanding of the method proper to the history of dogma and to positive theology. Neither is pure history, though both are based on history. The strictly historical method must be applied to establish a sound basis: in the search of documents, in the verification of texts, in their interpretation and so on. But after this spade work is done, theological considerations must prevail. The theological method studies the historical data as pieces of Tradition by which the revealed truth has been preserved through the centuries. For this it is necessary that the historian of dogma know well the authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith by which

the Magisterium may have elucidated in later years what was formerly believed only "obscurely and, as it were, implicitly".

In other words, unlike the secular historian, the theologian does not go back to the past to understand the present; he starts with the present to understand the past. From this vantage point he will discern in the historical data a continuous progressive movement from the Apostles until now, manifestations ever more explicit of the present faith of the Church. He need not read into the documents of antiquity what is not there, but he will see their *sensus plenior* (if I may borrow this term from exegesis) where the secular historian would acknowledge only the raw literal sense. His attitude is not altogether dissimilar from that of St. Augustine who read history in retrospect by the light of divine providence. (Cf. W. J. Burghardt, in Proceedings of the sixth annual Convention, The Catholic Theol. Society of America 1951 p. 70-75)

It goes without saying that there is a world of difference between this conception of the history of dogma and that favored by the new theology (15). The latter resembles rather closely the conception of the Modernists of 50 years ago, which was exposed and condemned by Pius X as involving dogmatic relativism (Denzinger 2079).

#### 6. *Authentic Teaching of the Magisterium (18-20)*

The Pope has no doubt that those Catholic theologians whom he has in mind throughout the Encyclical, are willing to abide by the definitive decisions of the Magis-

terium, those handed down "*solemni iudicio*". They are neither heretics nor schismatics. But he complains that they ignore papal pronouncements that come to them with less authority, such as encyclicals. If reputable theologians have disagreed in the past, they assume that nothing less than a solemn definition can settle the matter; and as long as none such is forthcoming, everyone is presumed free to construe papal documents according to his own interpretation of Tradition (27).

In reply, the Pope reminds them that encyclicals, besides often containing matters of dogma, may intend to settle points hitherto disputed, and that such decisions demand of themselves a positive assent on the part of the faithful, theologians included. In issuing them the Popes exercise what is technically known as the ordinary or authentic magisterium, of which it is also true to say: "He who heareth you, heareth me". The reason for all this is that to the living Magisterium alone has God entrusted the official interpretation of the deposit of faith (21, 23).

According to theologians, the doctrinal decrees of the Holy Office and the responses of the Biblical Commission belong in the same category because of the close connection of these two Roman congregations with the Pope. Also their decisions demand *per se* the positive assent of the faithful (Denzinger 2113).

This is technically known as "religious assent". It is a true internal assent, not a mere *silentium obsequiosum* such as the Jansenists were willing to give the papal decrees issued against them. Yet it is not the assent of either divine or ecclesiastical faith; its motive is not the authority

of God speaking nor the infallibility of the Magisterium, but the official position of the living Magisterium in the Church assigned to it by Christ.

One may ask: When the Pope declares a discussion closed (as he does in this Encyclical on monogenism), what exactly does that mean? Does it add new arguments, new evidence to one side of the discussion?

Perhaps, taking monogenism as a case in point, we may frame our answer this way: Owing to the theological evidence, monogenism was, already before *Humani Generis*, either theologically certain or close to divine faith (*proxima fidei*). Theologians disputed on the precise theological note, but they agreed that monogenism was evidently and intimately connected with what is revealed explicitly. The Pope's word, being of the highest doctrinal authority in the matter, now vouches for this connection (38). But theologians can still go on disputing whether monogenism is revealed formally or virtually.

However, further reflection has raised a philosophical problem. Should we classify this religious assent as a probable opinion or a true certitude? Either choice seems inadmissible. Merely probable opinions, when known as such, are not firm; yet the Pope demands a firm assent for merely authentic decisions. On the other hand, true certitude must be based on an infallible motive; yet the Pope does not claim to speak with infallibility in the cases under consideration.

Perhaps we had best compare religious assent to practical certitude, the state of mind, for instance, in which we board a train. Cold reason cannot exclude all possi-

bility of an accident, yet we do exclude all fear because otherwise we should have to stay at home forever. Similarly, religious assent does not rest on an infallible motive, yet is as firm as if all possibility of error were excluded. It is an extension of the virtue of faith, inasmuch as Christ's promise: "He who heareth you, heareth me", also applies to the ordinary teaching of the Pope.

Complaints have been raised against this doctrine as if it were putting shackles on the Catholic theologian (18). Yes and no. First of all, there are any number of problems in Catholic theology on which the Magisterium has said nothing so far either definitely or authentically; witness the numerous probable theses or assertions in our manuals and the questions freely disputed in our reviews. Secondly, the authentic decisions of the Magisterium, when examined closely, are generally seen to leave the door open for further study of the problem; witness especially the responses of the Biblical Commission. And if a reputable scholar should arrive at a different solution, theologians advise him to communicate his findings to the respective Roman congregation, but not to broadcast them, in defiance, as it were, of the Magisterium. Thirdly, even when the decision is definitive, progress is still possible and desirable (21), and that means, partly at least, further research on the same matter by theologians.

### *7. Sources of Revelation (21)*

The sources of revelation are Scripture and Tradition (18). The two combined contain all of the (public) revelation which God has granted to mankind, and which, according to Christ's institution, is to be preserved in

its entirety and interpreted by the ever living Magisterium. Tradition, however, as distinct from Scripture, is the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium whether in the past or in the present; it includes not only the official documents of the Magisterium itself, whether infallible or authentic, but indirectly also the works of the Fathers and theologians, even those of the laity, in as far as they touch on faith and morals.

All this is, of course, commonplace for Catholic theologians. Let us note, however, that here as well as elsewhere (18, 22) the Encyclical uses the modern term "Tradition", placed within quotation marks in the Latin text. It nowhere uses the plural "traditions", which dates back to the Council of Trent (Denzinger 783-4), and which was common among theologians from then on until this century. The change represents a difference in point of view, not in doctrine. If we speak of traditions, we emphasize the revealed truths which are handed on in the Church (quasi per manus traditae); if we speak of Tradition, we shift the emphasis to the mode or institution by which those truths are handed on, which is the Magisterium and its authoritative teaching.

But why this change from the plural to the singular, or why the shift of emphasis from the objective (passive) meaning to the active? The reason lies in the altered historical circumstances and in the consequent theological reflection. The Hussites of the 15th century and much more so the Reformers of the 16th century proclaimed the principle that the Bible was the only source of revelation, and that therefore nothing could be proposed by the

Church as of divine faith except the truths contained in the Bible. The Council of Trent countered this by decreeing that there are revealed truths handed on in the Church though not contained in the Bible. They were called "traditions" (*sine scripto traditiones* Denzinger 783).

That was enough then. Gradually, however, Catholic theologians realized that the fundamental difference between the old and the new faith lay not so much in the revealed truths themselves as in the means or agency by which they were transmitted. One means was the Bible, the other the authoritative preaching of the Magisterium. For Christ had commissioned the Apostles and their successors to preach all of divine revelation (Matthew 28, 20). This made the shift from "traditions" to "Tradition" inevitable, inasmuch as the preaching of the Magisterium is *one* though continued through the centuries, carried on by different persons, and stressing or clarifying now this truth, now that. The preaching is one because the truth preached is always the same.

Theologians then took one more step. Studying further the relation between Scripture and this new concept of Tradition, they came to the conclusion that Tradition is the primary source of revelation. For the Magisterium, by its preaching, not only hands on the truths not contained in the Bible, but also the Bible itself. The Bible, too, is part of Tradition. Good people are sometimes under the delusion that God indeed inspired the books of the Bible, but then left them to their fate as happens with ordinary human books. That is a deistic concept of the

Bible. God not only inspired the single books of the Bible, He also handed them "to the Church", as the Vatican Council says (Denzinger 1787), that is, to the Magisterium to be preserved, defended and interpreted as the "written word of God" (*verbum Dei scriptum*). Without the vigilance of the Magisterium, and therefore without Tradition, we would not have the Bible, or at least we would not be sure that we have in it "the written word of God". While the Bible has its own unique excellencies and prerogatives, yet, as far as security of belief goes, it depends on the authoritative direction and preaching of the Magisterium. This relation between the Bible and Tradition is nothing new. St. Augustine was fully alive to it when he wrote the oft-quoted sentence: "I should not believe the Gospel if I were not moved by the authority of the Catholic Church" (*ego evangelio non crederem nisi me catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas*).

#### 8. Rule of Faith and Sources of Revelation (21)

What is the difference between them? Is there any difference at all? Unfortunately theologians do not always give an unequivocal answer. But if we look closely at what the Vatican Council says (Denzinger 1792), the difference becomes evident enough. The Council speaks of Scripture and Tradition as "containing" divine revelation, and therefore as the two sources from which revelation may be drawn. But it also speaks of another agency which "proposes" to the faithful what they are to believe as Catholics, and that agency is the ever living Magisterium. True, the Council uses the term "Magisterium"

without qualification, but it evidently means the Magisterium living whenever anyone is prompted to ask what he is to believe as a Catholic.

Therefore the preaching of the Magisterium is both rule of faith and source of revelation. The rule of faith is the infallible teaching of the ever living Magisterium; today's Magisterium would tell the Catholic that he is to believe the Assumption if he wishes to remain a Catholic. Tradition is the preaching of the Magisterium by which the word of God was to be and has been handed on through the centuries (*verbum Dei traditum*).

#### 9. *Theologians and the Sources of Revelation* (21)

The Encyclical contains three admonitions for Catholic theologians, all of extreme importance for their work.

One is an exhortation to study the sources of revelation assiduously rather than indulge in hair-splitting speculations. The former "brings to theology ever new youth", the latter is apt to prove barren, "as we know from experience". It would be odious to hunt for examples where the Encyclical does not invite us.

The gist of the second admonition is contained in the last sentence, a quotation from Pius IX. It is the office of theologians to show that the latest pronouncements of the Magisterium, especially solemn definitions, are contained in the sources of revelation "in the same sense" in which they are now proposed. That does not mean in the same words or with the same clarity and precision; for there is dogmatic progress. It does mean the same idea, the same truth, the same dogma.

To those theologians who misunderstand or neglect dogmatic (and theological) progress, the Pope addresses a third admonition. It would be folly for a theologian, who is supposed to be familiar with the latest pronouncements, either to neglect these or to substitute for them again the vaguer expressions of former days. That would be tantamount to a denial of the living Magisterium as the rule of faith and of true dogmatic progress, both sanctioned by the Vatican Council.

#### 10. *Riches of the Sources of Revelation* (21)

It would not do to pass over one sentence in the same paragraph: "Each source of divinely revealed doctrine contains so many rich treasures of truth that they can really never be exhausted". We have here an echo of what the Pope had said more at length in the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. There, after deprecating a too liberal use of the accommodated sense of Scripture, he urged a deeper study of its literal sense: "For the Sacred Scriptures, written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, are of themselves rich in their native sense; endowed with a divine power, they have their own value; adorned with heavenly beauty, they radiate of themselves light and splendor—provided they are so fully and accurately explained by the interpreter that all the treasures of wisdom and prudence hidden in them are brought to light". But then he went on to the documents of Tradition, the works of the "Holy Fathers, the Doctors of the Church, and the renowned exegetes of the past ages". Of them he said that "they are distinguished by a certain sweet intuition

of heavenly things and by a marvelous keenness of mind, which enables them to fathom the profundities of the word of God, and to bring to light whatever can help to elucidate the teaching of Christ and promote holiness of life".

### 3. Manifest Errors (22-28)

*Humani generis* has been called the new Syllabus because like that of Pius IX (Denzinger 1701-1780) it enumerates many errors without entering into a lengthy discussion of them. This is true of doctrines pertaining to Scripture and theology, and these are meant in the present division.

#### 1. Errors Concerning Scripture (22-24)

Two particular problems of biblical exegesis are discussed later (37-40), but of general erroneous opinions regarding Scripture the Encyclical mentions four.

a. The first error is limiting the inerrancy of Scripture to matters of faith and morals. The Pope expresses surprise that this error which has been condemned so often and so vigorously by his predecessors as well as by himself (24), should again crop up among Catholic theologians. It is indeed strange at this late date that there should be even one who is not yet fully aware of the universal inspiration of the Bible and of an inevitable corollary, viz., its inerrancy in all assertions of the hagiographer no matter what subject is involved.

This error ties in with what is said later (39) about the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Those chapters contain

a number of "truths fundamental for our eternal salvation and a popular description of the origin of the human race and the chosen people". Theologians would call them "*inspirata per se*", and the Biblical Commission enumerated those truths which pertain to the first three chapters (Denzinger 2122). But if we then call the rest "*inspirata per accidens*", as St. Thomas allows, we must not conclude that they are not inspired or that they could contain error. The chapters are historical in a certain sense, though the problem, not yet fully explored, is how we shall understand the kind of history they offer us.

b. The second error is distinguishing between the human and the divine sense of Scripture in order to limit inerrancy to the latter. There is, of course, a distinction between the human and the divine sense inasmuch as two distinct minds, God's and the hagiographer's, co-operated in the production of every sacred book and every part thereof (Denzinger 784). A distinction which becomes even more marked if we hold with modern theologians that the hagiographer was as a rule not conscious of the divine influence under which he was writing. But every theologian knows (or should know) that the "literal" sense of the assertions of the hagiographer always agrees with the divine sense, that is, with what God wanted written down. God had to make sure of this since He is the principal author, the hagiographer merely the instrument chosen by Him to convey to us His own assertions. But then, as every divine assertion is infallibly true, so must be every assertion of the hagiographer.

We may add that, if we abstract from the controver-

sies on the plenary sense (*sensus plenior*) and the multiple sense of Scripture, the distinction between the human and the divine sense is valid for the typical sense. In fact, many define the "literal" sense as the sense intended by God and the hagiographer, whereas the typical sense is intended only by God, the principal author. But the objections against the inerrancy of Scripture are drawn almost exclusively from the "literal", not from the typical sense, and therefore the Encyclical can be silent about the latter.

c. The third error, rather one of method, is disregarding the authentic interpretation of the Magisterium. It is of faith that the Magisterium of the Church is the official interpreter of Scripture. But if this is so, it is incumbent on the Catholic exegete to ascertain the interpretations of the Magisterium (and the Fathers) where such are extant. It is the ancient rule of Catholic hermeneutics: Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with the analogy of faith. Individual books or passages must not be handled as if divine revelation either in Scripture itself or in Tradition had said nothing else on the same theme.

Let no one see in this a repudiation of so-called scientific exegesis. Some 10 years ago, certain ecclesiastical circles in Italy thought that the scientific approach to the Bible was superfluous, nay harmful, and that pious meditations and edifying aspirations were sufficient for the right understanding of the Bible and far more profitable. Such short-sighted advice to Bible students was severely rebuked in a letter of the Biblical Commission

to the Italian episcopate (1941) and rectified positively by the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943).

But, as the Instruction of the Biblical Commission of May 13, 1950 had already pointed out, the Encyclical does declare unsatisfactory and incomplete the purely scientific approach to the Bible, which the Instruction describes as one that takes into account only the words and the proximate context. The outlook of the Catholic exegete is wider; he is conscious that all revelation, whether contained in Scripture or in Tradition, comes from the same God. Divine revelation is one and indivisible; it must therefore be interpreted in that light.

This naturally brings to mind the passage in the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* where Pius XII exhorts Catholic exegetes not to be content with a purely scientific (historical, archeological, philological) exposition of Scripture, but to bring out also its theological sense. But though both passages speak of the purely scientific interpretation of Scripture, there is a difference in the point of view. *Humani generis* rather looks to the correct determination of the divine truth, asserting that this can only be had in the complete context of revelation. The theological sense which is stressed in the earlier Encyclical, comprises the full dogmatic and moral implications of the literal and typical sense, and Catholic exegetes are urged to lay them bare in their commentaries for the benefit of professors of theology and preachers. Our Encyclical is theoretical, the earlier one more practical.

d. The fourth error is substituting a symbolic sense

of the Old Testament for the "literal" sense so as to bypass the objections raised by higher criticism against its inerrancy. The Encyclical does not explain in what precisely the symbolic or spiritual sense consists which is to be substituted for the "literal" sense. As far as I know, it consists in seeing everywhere in the Old Testament a relation to and a preparation for the coming Redeemer. If so, the new theory would be reminiscent of the old one which explained the Old Testament allegorically precisely in order to save its inerrancy. (Cf. J. L. McKenzie, in *Theological Studies* 1951 p. 365-381; J. Coppens, in *Nouvelle Revue Théol.* 1952 p. 7-8).

But it seems that, as the Magisterium has never condemned all allegorical interpretation, so not all symbolical interpretation is frowned upon as long as the primacy of the "literal" sense is safeguarded.

## 2. *Errors concerning Dogma (25-28)*

The Encyclical goes on to enumerate more than a dozen errors pertaining to the various departments of dogmatic theology. No complete list was intended. The order followed seems to be that customary in our manuals; but the last three pertain to the treatise on the Church and to apologetics, both of which generally precede dogma proper.

a. It is doubtful that human reason can, by arguing from created things, prove the existence of a personal God unless it is aided by revelation and grace (Cf. Denzinger 1785, 1806, 2145).

b. The world exists from all eternity (Cf. Denzinger 428, 1783).

- c. The creation of the world was necessary (Cf. Denzinger 428, 1783).
- d. God does not know, infallibly and from all eternity, the free actions of men (Cf. Denzinger 1784).
- e. It is doubtful if angels are personal beings.
- f. It is doubtful if spirit differs essentially from matter.
- g. God cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision (Cf. Denzinger 1021-3, 1385, 1516, 2103).
- h. Neither original sin nor sin in general is an offense against God (Cf. Denzinger 789, 790).
- i. Christ's satisfaction on the cross must accordingly be re-interpreted (Cf. Denzinger 789, 790).
- j. Christ is only symbolically present in the Eucharist (Cf. Denzinger 877).
- k. The Roman Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ are not adequately the same.
- l. The necessity of belonging to the true Church is an empty formula.
- m. The credibility of the Christian faith cannot be established by reason (Cf. Denzinger 1790).

It would take us too far afield to discuss the individual errors in detail, especially since they do not constitute a system or grow out of a system. But what the Encyclical said about the first error mentioned above against the inerrancy of Scripture, viz., that it had been condemned so often by the Magisterium (22), may be applied to all the errors here enumerated. Of the first four it is said that they are distinctly against the decrees of the Vatican Council. But they are all at variance with solemn defini-

tions or with the authentic teaching of the Magisterium of the past or at least with the common doctrine of theologians. I have added references to Denzinger where extant. The current manuals of Theology refute most of the errors at length; the Encyclical now underlines the validity and force of these refutations.

Apart from the theological censure to be assigned to each error, those listed under a, b, c, d, f are also refuted in philosophy, that is, from the natural evidence available to human reason. Nevertheless, if we go by the context, the Encyclical treats them as errors in theology, not in philosophy. Attention is drawn to the existence and validity of the theological arguments which show them to be errors.

In the end the Pope voices his keen sorrow that he should be obliged to rehearse truths so well known and to warn certain of his sons against "manifest errors and dangers of error". For the deviations condemned do not touch on subtle and controverted questions. They have been recognized as deviations and proved to be such by competent Theologians for centuries.

## II. ERRORS IN PHILOSOPHY (29-35)

1. This new section does not begin with a list of modern philosophical errors either inside or outside the Catholic Church (5-7), nor with a warning for Catholic philosophers to be on their guard. But, as a sort of introduction, four functions are detailed for which the Catholic Church values human reason, in fact relies on the natural powers of reason. The first is that of proving with cer-

tainty God's existence (2, 25). The second is that of clearly formulating the natural law, that is, the first principles of morality (2). The third is that of proving the credibility of the Christian religion (4, 27). The fourth is that of furnishing us with a better insight into the mysteries of faith (16). The first two functions belong to philosophy, the third to apologetics, the fourth to scholastic theology.

The Encyclical does not say or imply that none of these functions can be performed except by a Ph.D. in philosophy. Human reason begins with untrained common sense and can go a long way with it, and trained philosophers will always be in a minority. But for Catholic theologians and future priests the study of philosophy is indispensable because none of the four functions can be performed "safely and adequately" except by one who is properly trained.

2. But then the question arises naturally: Since there are many philosophies, ancient and modern, which one is the future theologian to study? The answer is peremptory: Scholastic philosophy. The Encyclical does not use that term, but the descriptions of the philosophy meant fit only what is generally known as scholastic philosophy. For that is "the philosophy taught in our schools" (33, 34); it is the "wisdom of the ages" (31) and a "patrimony handed on from earlier Christian ages" (30); it is the *philosophia perennis* (33) and the "Christian philosophy" (34); it is "received and honored by the Church" (33) and therefore "our philosophy" (33) because it has the approval of the Magisterium which has found its

"principles and major assertions" in harmony with divine revelation (30).

No complete list of the "principles and major assertions" of this philosophy is given; only a few are mentioned, extremely important in the present-day confusion of ideas: the validity of human knowledge, the three metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, of causality (in the scholastic sense), of finality, lastly the possibility of attaining certitude. But their acceptance rules out at once the philosophical systems of skepticism, relativism, idealism, immanentism, pragmatism, existentialism—errors already scored in the beginning of the Encyclical among those prevalent outside the Catholic Church (6-7) and possible sources of infection for Catholic theologians.

We should have been astonished if, in this connection, the Encyclical did not recall the ruling of Popes and Canon Law that future priests be trained in philosophy "according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor" (32). Scholastic philosophy must be Thomistic, breathing the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas, the prince of Scholastics. The reason behind this ruling is that the Church knows from centuries of experience the soundness of Thomistic philosophy and its effectiveness for training man's mind. For apart from its harmony with revelation, scholastic or Thomistic philosophy stands out for its unique pedagogical excellencies: "clear exposition of questions and their solution", "accurate definitions of terms and clear-cut distinctions" (33). Moreover, it can serve for pushing forward the frontiers of human knowledge.

But the Encyclical does not modify the prescriptions of Canon Law. The Pope certainly did not intend to tone down the grave obligation resting on all seminary professors to follow St. Thomas as norm and master of their teaching. At the same time, as history shows, there are various ways of complying loyally with this injunction. Pius X and Benedict XV as well as Pius XII on other occasions let it be known that there is some latitude in following out the direction of the Magisterium. In our Encyclical, too, which is concerned with the foundations of philosophy and of Catholic faith, the Pope insists on "principles and major assertions". However worded or proposed to the students, these must be in harmony with St. Thomas. The Encyclical authorizes no one to quote it in favor of a particular form of Thomism. (Hayen, in *Nouvelle Revue Théol.* 1951 p. 131-3).

3. The Encyclical also faces objections which, sad to say, are rather widespread today, even in Catholic circles.

a. Scholastic philosophy, it is said, may be a cherished heirloom, a precious patrimony, but the modern mind is not satisfied with repeating parrot-like stereotyped formulas and theses. Anything like stagnancy is repugnant to it. It yearns for progress, which is one of the supreme categories of modern thought. Is progress possible in scholastic philosophy?

The Encyclical wisely distinguishes. Scholastic philosophy treats of many things which lie wholly outside the sphere of Catholic dogma. We may take for examples *actio in distans*, hylomorphism, the definitions of time and space, *species impressa*, the best form of civil government

and so on. The Church leaves philosophers free to dispute on them to their hearts' content. Also where "principles and major assertions" are concerned, progress *secundum quid* is permissible, and the Encyclical suggests possible modes (31). First, by clothing these truths "in a fitter and richer dress", by working out a "more effective terminology", by ridding them of antiquated or unsuitable scholastic aids, by enriching them with the "sound fruits of human progress". Second, by eliminating errors if such have crept into scholastic philosophy, by building truth upon truth, new truth upon traditional truth, and by observing nature more painstakingly. Third, as was said in an earlier section (9), by utilizing modern errors as an incentive for subjecting certain philosophical tenets to further scrutiny. (Cf. G. Weigel, in *Theological Studies* 1951 p. 542).

A large-hearted program of progress. But the traditional truths themselves must remain intact. It would be utter folly to discard them or to contaminate them with false principles; such an undertaking would be an imprudent irenicism and would soon degrade scholastic philosophy to the sorry status of an antique.

b. Modern critics, including some Catholics, scorn scholastic philosophy as being outmoded. To its metaphysical theses, each stamped "*ne varietur*", they would prefer approximate assertions which could be altered and improved from day to day. They deride the scholastic method as being suited for the medieval mentality prevailing in our seminaries, but not, in spite of its excellencies, adapted to life in the modern world. They also think

that scholastic philosophy, esteeming only universal concepts and immutable essences, misses the truth contained in modern existentialism. Finally, they claim or seem to claim that Catholic dogma could be harmonized with any philosophy, ancient or modern.

These stock objections are not refuted in detail, but the last two are briefly answered by saying that no philosophy which denies the validity of "metaphysical reasoning" can be reconciled with Catholic dogma; for "metaphysical reasoning" is involved vitally in the four functions for which the Catholic Church relies on human reason. It is for those therefore who would advocate the adoption in our schools of a new philosophical system, to prove to the Magisterium that it does not deny "the validity of metaphysical reasoning". Let them try their hand at idealism or immanentism or materialism or existentialism.

c. Complaints have been made that scholastic philosophy, in its epistemology, disregards the will and the emotions, as if these did not exert their influence on our thinking and judging. If I am not mistaken, it is for this reason that scholastic philosophy is sometimes dubbed "rationalistic" by its detractors.

Again a distinction is in order. "Christian philosophy" does not deny that, as Plato said, we must strive for the truth with our "whole soul", and that the affections of the soul may influence our judgment for good or ill; they can aid or hinder reason in its quest for truth (2, 4). But what is really meant by the complaint is that the appetitive and affective faculties of the soul have an "intuition" of their own, and that man should follow them in his de-

cisions rather than the light of reason. Such an idea must be rejected. It would confuse cognition, which is guided by evidence, with those powers of the soul which grope blindly after their object.

In this connection, the Encyclical quotes a beautiful doctrine of St. Thomas. It is that of a certain "con-naturalness" or congeniality which the soul may experience when higher goods of the moral order are proposed to it. While such an affective sympathy is not evidence, it yet "can aid reason in its investigations". But this doctrine of St. Thomas shows how far the Scholastics are from "neglecting the function of the will and the emotions" in explaining the process of cognition.

d. Lastly, the Encyclical speaks of two branches of philosophy in particular: theodicy and ethics. "According to the new views", the time-honored arguments for the fundamental truths are to give way to another which would show that the "truths which faith teaches about a personal God and His precepts, correspond perfectly to the necessities of life". This is considered the best or the only argument in the face of modern existentialism; through it men would "avoid despair", the inevitable conclusion of existential thinking and living.

The new argument reminds us, of course, of Kant's practical reason, but the Encyclical does not delay to discuss it. It merely refers to the authoritative documents issued by Leo XIII and Pius X and to the decrees of the Vatican Council (35). These should have been enough to keep Catholics from advancing proposals of that nature. Fundamentally, what was lacking in them was a

proper reverence for the Magisterium, whose divinely appointed mission includes vigilance lest erroneous philosophical theories affect adversely Catholic dogma. A proper respect would naturally lead a Catholic philosopher to study the documents of the Magisterium and so avoid proposing theories out of harmony with its teachings.

The foregoing clearly shows that the Magisterium is interested in philosophy only as *ancilla theologiae*. No, the Magisterium does not prescribe to philosophy what it must hold, how it must proceed, what proofs it must use, how it should meet objections. Philosophy stands on its own feet, and the Magisterium does not dispute its independence. But being a purely human science, philosophy may err, and history tells us that philosophers have erred, even in their "principles and major assertions". On the other hand, theology needs philosophy (29), but one which is sound in its "principles and major assertions" and is therefore in harmony with revelation.

It is because scholastic philosophy has been found by the Magisterium to meet this test, that it has received the approval of the Magisterium as the *ancilla theologiae*, and that it has become "the philosophy taught in our schools" (33, 34), that is, seminaries.

That does not mean that scholastic philosophy works only in the interest and for the benefit of theology or the Catholic faith; it does mean that scholastic philosophy, while working in its own interest and with its own methods, will always esteem the Magisterium of the Church as a negative norm. The scholastic philosopher

will not formulate concepts and propositions which would clash with the teachings of the Magisterium. For it is one of his own philosophical principles that truth cannot contradict truth, and as a Catholic he knows that the Magisterium, unlike himself, cannot err in matters of faith and morals.

### III. ERRORS IN SCIENCE (36-38)

Contrary to a belief widely held, the Catholic Church is not afraid of the findings of science in any of its branches. Truth cannot contradict truth because the same God is the fountainhead of all truth (31). But the Encyclical insists on the old distinction between clearly proved truths of science (facts, laws, principles) and mere hypotheses or conjectures "having some sort of scientific foundation". The former are certain, the latter have more or less probability and therefore may be revised or abandoned. The Church welcomes whatever science is able to establish for certain. And if there is conflict between science and Catholic dogma, the Vatican Council has indicated the root of the trouble with an unerring finger: either dogma is misinterpreted or the assertion of scientists is not certain. If therefore a scientific hypothesis is directly or indirectly opposed to dogma, it behooves a Catholic scientist to re-examine its premises.

After this general introduction, the Encyclical goes on to discuss the theory of evolution, not in general (5), but as applied to man (37). This is probably the chapter of greatest interest to modern philosophers and theologians, many of whom have been engaged on this same prob-

lem. It also shows the extreme care with which the Pope chose his words lest he be misunderstood.

To begin with, the Encyclical supposes as admitted all around that man consists of soul and body, two substantial parts and really distinct from each other. Now the theory of evolution cannot apply to man's soul. Not only does reason assure us of this, but also "Catholic faith obliges us to hold that the human soul is immediately created by God" (Denzinger 348, 738). This truth is mentioned only in parenthesis; the Pope saw no need to insist on it when speaking to Catholics. There may have been Catholics who did not stress it sufficiently when discussing evolution; there seem to be none now. Absolute evolution, if it were extended to the human soul, would be against sound reason and Catholic doctrine.

For Catholics then the question of human evolution is narrowed down to man's body. As is well known, outright evolutionists suppose that man is descended from a brute animal: chimpanzee, gorilla, gibbon, ourang. The Encyclical is less specific; it speaks of descent from "pre-existent living matter". The difference does not seem significant in the context. But in either case can a Catholic admit such an origin of the human body?

The Encyclical allows full freedom of discussion. But it adds two provisos: the discussion should be carried on a) by experts and b) with "gravity, moderation and discretion", as befits experts; also both sides to the dispute should stand ready to submit to an eventual authentic decision of the Magisterium, as befits Catholics. But no Catholic should take the stand either that the origin of

the human body from pre-existent living matter is already a proved fact in science—that is, from the evidence available in August 1950—or that divine revelation says nothing on the subject. The first, no doubt, because the positive arguments for such an evolution are not yet fully convincing (5) and because many scientific and philosophical reasons speak against it; the second because the formation of the bodies of our first parents is as a matter of fact described in the second chapter of Genesis, which is part of divine revelation.

Let us just note in passing that the Encyclical does not interpret the pertinent passages of Genesis. It merely reminds us that the sources of revelation demand "reserve and caution" in the discussion of the problem. But Catholic exegetes are still free to exercise their ingenuity on those texts, in which they may be helped by what is said later (39) on the first eleven chapters of Genesis and their historical value. One thing seems pretty clear. While the first two chapters of Genesis may not be irreconcilable with an evolution of the human body from a lower form of life, such an origin of the human body was certainly not in the mind of the sacred writer.

But on a related question, monogenism vs. polygenism, the discussion is now closed for Catholics (38).

As understood in the Encyclical, polygenism may mean the theory that after Adam there existed on this earth true men not descended from him by generation, or the theory that Adam is not one individual, but a symbol or personification of a multitude of first parents (something like Uncle Sam or John Bull). There seems to be little

real difference between the two theories. But though the Encyclical mentions no names, it is too well known that both were looked upon with favor by some Catholics here and abroad. This is now ruled out. Neither theory can be reconciled with what the Magisterium has always taught on original sin. While the Encyclical is not a new definition on this point, a Catholic would be rash to ignore it (18). Some die-hards might wish to see a loophole in the words "for it is unintelligible" (*cum nequaquam appareat*) as if they left the door open for a different decision in the future. This would be an illusion. Polygenism is definitely banned; it should not even be put forward as a hypothesis (20, 36). Monogenism is the Catholic doctrine, though the Encyclical does not settle the further question what precise theological note is to be assigned to it.

What about Preadamites? The Encyclical says nothing about them. In fact, they are excluded from the discussion by the first definition of polygenism. Preadamites are supposed to have existed and died out before Adam, whereas the Encyclical is only interested in men existing after Adam and descended from him, because Scripture and Tradition refer only to them wherever there is question of original sin.

However, the Encyclical indirectly touches on another problem of anthropology, viz., the origin of the human races actually known. Because of the profound differences between them, which have perdured for thousands of years, many non-Catholic anthropologists have demanded a distinct pair of protoparents for each race. Such a solution of the problem can no longer be advanced

by a Catholic. But since no positive solution is given, Catholics are free to advocate any other that seems plausible to them.

#### IV. ERRORS IN HISTORY (39-40)

History is much more involved in divine revelation than the sciences, and many are the historical problems which the Catholic exegete must face both in the Old and the New Testament. The Encyclical singles out one that has come to the front recently among Catholics, viz., the interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The selection of this particular problem was occasioned by a letter which the Biblical Commission lately (1948) sent to Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, on this subject, and which received a rather free interpretation at the hands of some, so that the divine inspiration of those chapters seemed in peril.

The stand of the Encyclical on the question does not differ from that of the letter and may be put thus: Although these chapters are not composed in accordance with what we mean today by the scientific writing of history, they are yet historical in a true sense; on the other hand, their precise historical character is still obscure, and further light must come from experts in the field. As the Encyclical explains, our concept of scientific history is derived from the ancient classical and modern historians—whereas those chapters of Genesis “contain in simple and metaphorical language, adapted to the mentality of a people of low culture, the principal truths fundamental to our eternal salvation and a description of the origin of the human race and the chosen people”.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis could therefore be likened to popular history rightly understood. But then the question naturally comes to mind: Did the hagiographer embody in them "popular narratives"? The answer of the Encyclical is the one common among theologians: He may have done so; but if he did, his choice of documents was not haphazard, but was guided by divine inspiration which prevented him from copying error. The fact is that "of all the ancient nations of the East the people of Israel enjoyed a singular preeminence in writing history, by reason of the antiquity and trustworthiness of its records—a quality which may well be attributed to the charism of divine inspiration and to the peculiar religious purpose of Bible history" (*Divino Afflante Spiritu*). All the more must we reject the idea that the hagiographer may have embodied "myths" or things on a par with them. Myths are the progeny of unbridled imagination, whereas the sobriety and simplicity which we find in the sacred writers, prove them "decidedly superior to the profane writers of antiquity".

### CONCLUSION (41-44)

The last four paragraphs hardly call for a commentary. The Pope repeats what he had already said about the small number of those who were led astray by the new theology (10, 28); he is certain that the vast majority (*plerique*) of Catholic theologians has not become entangled in it. Yet he judges that it is better to forewarn all and so head off the beginning of a false theological movement which would be bound to end up in a blind

alley or on the brink of an abyss. Therefore he charges Bishops and Superiors of religious congregations to watch carefully that none of the ideas censured in the Encyclical be propagated anywhere within their jurisdiction.

Finally, he summarizes for the benefit of "professors in ecclesiastical institutes" (43-44). They are to "accept religiously the doctrinal norms which we have laid down and observe them exactly in the instruction of their students". They should instil into their pupils the same attitude of "reverence and submission to the Magisterium" which is their own. By all means let them carry on private research and so contribute to the progress of their science, but let them not be too hasty in adopting novel theories, and let them guard against sacrificing truth in dealing with dissidents.

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More, much more could be written on this Encyclical. Names of authors and titles of books more or less hinted at in the papal document might be supplied; proofs might be added for the doctrinal decisions; the views of commentators might be compared and evaluated. Above all, it would be interesting to point out the theological progress so marked in the Encyclical or trace the lines of future progress also discernible in it. In any case, there is so much matter, negative and positive, that only a prolonged study can assure a thorough grasp of this far-reaching and far-branching pronouncement of the supreme Magisterium living now.

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